

Awareness of Dental students about tobacco in a Teaching Hospital

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ABSTRACT

Background: Tobacco is one of the leading causes of death and morbidity these days all over the world. It is important to stop the practice of tobacco in which dentists can play an important role by teaching the oral hygiene practices to the patients. So, the aim of this study was to check the level of awareness regarding tobacco side effects and cessation among the BDS students. **Materials and Methods:** This cross sectional study was conducted in College of Medical Sciences and Teaching Hospital to evaluate the level of awareness about tobacco and its side effects among the BDS students. A questionnaire consisting of relevant questions regarding knowledge of tobacco was distributed among 150 dental students to check the awareness about tobacco. **Results:** The results of the study concluded that 76% of the students were aware about the ill effects of smoking or chewing tobacco on health. 71% of the total students enrolled chose to be non-smokers in future. **Conclusion:** The present study concludes that tobacco cessation program should be included in the curriculum of dental students so that they get proper training in imparting the valuable information to the general public.

Keywords: awareness; cessation; dental; students; tobacco.

INTRODUCTION

One of the leading causes of disability and premature deaths all over the globe is tobacco. There are annually six million deaths due to tobacco use which can expectedly rise unto annually 7.5 million by 2020. In South Asian countries like India, Nepal, this tobacco related deaths are among the highest all over the globe and can increase further in future if no preventive steps are taken.¹

By starting tobacco cessation programs in their daily practices, dentists can play an important role by giving opportunity of a healthy lifestyle to the people visiting their practice. The dentists can act as untapped resources which can provide the patients with counseling and advice against the use of tobacco.² Dentists when compared to physicians and other health care professionals are more likely to provide counseling and advice regarding the stoppage of the use of tobacco along with providing education regarding the side effects which can occur with the use of tobacco products.³ But still the students studying dental courses are less likely to provide counseling to the patients regarding stopping of tobacco use to the patients as they lack

the training as well as confidence themselves about the tobacco side effects.⁴

It is not only evidence based strategy and cost effective method to train the dental students regarding the tobacco cessation counseling but also they can help the other health care providers to help them impart the knowledge to the patient who is indulged in tobacco consuming habit.³ The educators need to increase both their clinical competencies and theoretical knowledge to increase the interventional effectiveness so as to efficiently motivate the unmotivated patients to quit tobacco along with the keeping up of follow up regarding the same.⁵

There is a huge role of courses like Oral Medicine, Oral hygiene programs and other similar courses in preventing the disease due to tobacco use and promotion of health that can occur by stopping this tobacco habit. All these things lead to a conclusion that the ability of dentist to counsel patients against the use of tobacco by explaining the side effects of tobacco is foremost. But still the training regarding tobacco cessation counseling is not a part of routine

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dental education and nor it is included in the dental curriculum of the course.⁶ The aim of this study was to check the knowledge of BDS students regarding consequences and risk factors of tobacco.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This cross sectional study was conducted among the dental students of College of Medical Sciences and Teaching Hospital to evaluate the level of awareness about tobacco and its side effects. The study was initiated with the submission of the proposal of study to IRC in February 2018 and was completed with the preparation of manuscript in May 2018. A total of 150 students were enrolled in the study and the students willing to participate in this study were only enrolled. All the enrolled students were distributed a questionnaire which consisted of relevant questions regarding the knowledge of tobacco and its products, role of tobacco in production of premalignant and malignant lesions along with its socioeconomic effects. Sufficient amount of time was given to fill out the questionnaire and each questionnaire was kept anonymous so as to avoid any bias because of social pressure. Microsoft excel sheets were compiled and tables of results were formed after collection of the raw data.

RESULTS

The results of the study concluded that 76% of the students were aware about the ill effects of smoking or chewing tobacco on health (Table 1). Out of these 76% students, those knowing about the ill effects of tobacco on lungs and heart were 40% and 14% respectively. Those students saying that tobacco use causes oral cancer were 10% whereas those saying that tobacco use causes diabetes and impotence were 4% and 6% respectively. Rest 2% students told that use of tobacco leads to many systemic infections and psychological problems (Figure 1). 71% of the total students enrolled chose to be non-smokers in future.

Table 1. Knowledge about ill effects of tobacco on human body.		
Answer	Number	Percentage(%)
Yes	114	76%
No	36	24%
Total	150	100%

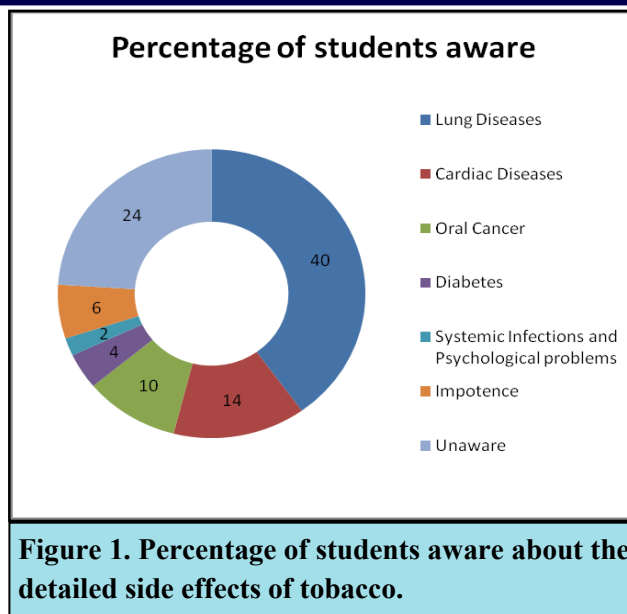


Figure 1. Percentage of students aware about the detailed side effects of tobacco.

DISCUSSION

All over the world, malignancies form the major cause of fear among people when it comes to disability, morbidity and mortality. Malignancies are among the five major causes of deaths all over the globe within various genders, races, socioeconomic and ethnic groups. Oral cancer forms the 6th most common cause of cancer related deaths all over the world which is mostly associated with the use of tobacco either in smoking form or chewing form. Males are most commonly involved with the incidence of oral cancer as they are more indulged in tobacco use habit when compared to females.⁷

The high incidence of oral cancer has been seen in countries of South Asia like India, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh and this higher incidence of oral cancer can be attributed to increased use of tobacco or its products in these countries.⁸ People in various regions of these countries use different forms of tobacco like betel quid, khaini, mishri, zarda, gutkha, mawa, naswar along with cigarette and bidi smoking. In some parts of these countries, even reverse smoking is also very common which involves keeping the lighted part of cigarette or bidi inside the mouth which is extremely harmful as it harms the individual's oral mucosa by heat produced from lighted end and the carcinogens released from the use of tobacco.⁹ People in these parts of the globe are also involved in alcohol consumption especially in Nepal and India. Alcohol consumption is not directly associated with the

cancer formation but when ingested along with tobacco use; its effect gets doubled or tripled because alcohol causes dehydration of oral mucosa leading to increased permeability and more leaching of tobacco carcinogens into the oral cavity ultimately leading to cancer at a much higher pace.¹⁰

One of the most common drug use done for recreational purpose these days is smoking. Smoking cigarettes has become a style statement in some societies which tend to suggest that people who are indulged in smoking cigarettes are more stylish and modern as compared to non smokers. Over 1 billion people all over the globe apart from race, gender and ethnicity are involved in smoking which makes it quite a popular thing.¹¹

According to the results of the present study, 24% of the total enrolled students had no idea about the ill effects of smoking on health of a human being like lung diseases, cardiovascular complications, oral cancer, diabetes, impotence, psychological effects and systemic infections. Results suggested that 71% of the total students decided to be non smokers in future and this might be attributed to the knowledge about some ill effects of tobacco consumption on human body.

According to the study, there were about 24% of the students who were not at all aware of the tobacco and its ill effects and those who were aware of were also having a partial or incomplete knowledge about the topic. It is the duty of a dentist towards the society so as to educate them regarding the ill effects of tobacco use and motivate them for tobacco cessation. But if the budding dentists themselves are not adequately trained in tobacco cessation programs and have insufficient knowledge regarding tobacco and its side effects,

then how can they educate the society to take preventive measures. The dental students all over the world should have adequate knowledge about this topic so that they not even educate the patients coming to their practice but also educate physicians and other health care professionals to further inculcate preventive measures among the patients visiting them regarding the health promoting benefits of tobacco cessation.

The present study shows that even if majority of students knew about the ill effects of tobacco on human body, still around 24% of students were totally unaware of the tobacco side effects. Even those who knew were having partial or inadequate knowledge regarding the topic and lacked proper training to further impart this education to the patients. So, this study opens a new path to be followed in terms of including tobacco cessation training in the curriculum of dental students so as to impart them proper education regarding the topic. There should be courses in field of Oral Medicine, Oral Hygiene programs to give the students adequate training in the particular field so that they don't lack the confidence when imparting the same education to the patients in need. This is a very strategic as well as cost effective way to educate the society about the ill effects of tobacco use and to impart tobacco cessation training to the public in general.

CONCLUSION

The present study concludes that tobacco cessation program should be included in the curriculum of dental students so that they get proper training in imparting the valuable information to the general public. Also there should be provision of short term courses to give proper training to these budding dentists so that they can make the society free of the ill effects caused by the use of tobacco.

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Citation: Garg D. Awareness of Dental students about tobacco in a Teaching Hospital. *JCMS Nepal*. 2018;14(2):107-10.