

TOBACCO USE AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH

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There is a global concern for the tobacco smoking epidemic with women and children and Asia as targets of the tobacco industry. Both mainstream smoke and side stream smoke is a health concern. Secondhand smoke (SHS) is a major source of indoor air pollution that contains over 4,000 chemicals with 60 known or suspected cancer-causing substances. There is a growing evidence of the health impact of SHS in the general population. However, there is an even greater concern worldwide of its adverse effects in children because of their smaller lungs and less developed immune system. Data from the World Health Organization has shown that there are nearly 700 million children exposed to the 1.2 billion adult smokers. Children whose fathers smoke have 30% higher risk of suffering from respiratory diseases and middle ear infections. These health problems are even greater if their mothers smoke. In utero exposure to SHS from maternal smoking has resulted in low birth weight, reduced lung function and a higher risk of sudden infant death syndrome. Asthmatic children exposed to SHS also have higher frequency and severity of asthma.

Majority of studies on the hazards of cigarette smoking in children are linked to secondhand smoke. However, very little is said about the dangers of smoking initiation at an early age, the multiple triggers involved and nicotine addiction. Studies from NIDA have shown that addiction is a result of a combination of environmental factors, genetic differences and the unique susceptibility of the target population. Thus, it would be interesting to find out the knowledge, attitude and practices (KAP) of young children with regards to cigarette smoking. This paper aims to provide an overview of smoking in children using data gathered separately from the Philippines and Malaysia representing the same geographical location but with diverse cultural and religious backgrounds.

The Philippine study consisted of children age 6-14 years. By 7.67 \pm 1.36 years, 80% know what cigarettes were. Their main sources of information were television, parents and neighbors. Within their lifetime, 9.5% were offered cigarettes either by friends and neighbors or their parents. The mean age of smoking initiation was 11.11 \pm 1.05 years (range = 6 –13 years). Even if 84% of the children believe that cigarette smoking will make you sick 4.1% of the children still tried smoking. Curiosity, peer pressure and loneliness were the top three reasons given for trying cigarettes. Fortunately, 48% still do not like to smoke because their parents prohibit it. While 37% and 40% of the children do not like to try marijuana and methamphetamine respectively because the law prohibits its use, only 10-11% think that the law prohibits cigarette smoking. Among the variables included in this study the following were found to be statistically significant risk factors for cigarette use among children: 1. Mean age between user (11.11 years) and non-users (10.35 \pm 1.2) with a p value < .002 2. Male sex with an Odd's ratio (OR) = 1.99 and 95% CI (0.83, 4.84) and 3. Being offered cigarette with an OR= 14 (5.96, 36.98).

Results from a survey conducted during "World NO Tobacco Day" in 3 states in Malaysia, 20% of the 10-12 year old respondents claimed they were smoking while 42%, 29% and 25% of the respondents aged 13-15, 16-18 and 19-20 respectively were already smoking. In each age group more boys smoked with 25% smoking by 10-12 years and 56% by age 13-15. Based on an adult survey conducted simultaneously, 14.75% claimed smoking before age 10 and 13.11% by age 10-15 years. The study showed a positive association between parents who smoke and children who smoke. Different logos of cigarette brands were shown to the children to find out the impact of direct advertising versus brand stretching. The responses for popular brands showed that they associate them with cigarette while others specially for those who do not smoke associate them with fashion, sports, music, vacation among others. Interestingly, both smokers and non-smokers can identify the logo of a cigarette that sponsored a sports event in national television correctly.

While the variables focused on by these two studies were different, one can see that for both races, even in early adolescence (10-12 years) or younger children already smoked. In the Philippines and Malaysia, parents may play a pivotal role either in deterring or influencing smoking initiation. Media advertising either directly or indirectly is another important factor in

smoking initiation. Regardless of race, religion or creed we need to focus on our children as industry documents show that they are the present targets for nicotine addiction.

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KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES OF FILIPINO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN FROM GRADES 3 – 6 IN SELECTED PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN QUEZON CITY REGARDING SUBSTANCE ABUSE *Kiat Wenceslao A, Makalinao Irma R, Maramba, Nelia PC. National Poison Control and Information Service, UP-PGH, Ward 14-A Room 100, Philippine General Hospital, Taft Avenue, Manila 1000 Philippines. **Made possible by a grant from the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development***

SURVEY OF SMOKING PATTERNS IN CHILDREN AND ADULTS FROM THREE DIFFERENT AREAS IN MALAYSIA. *Rahmat Awang, Irma Makalinao, Razak Lajis David Yap, Yong Check Yoon National Poison Centre and the Clearinghouse for Tobacco Control. **Made possible by a grant from Rockefeller Foundation***