

control was taught in the school, it cannot comment on the content or intensity of the curriculum given.

Educational program can serve a useful role in tobacco control. However, unless they are backed up by strong public health policies, which help young people, refrain from using tobacco, educational programs have only modest results.

As yet there is no comprehensive ban on tobacco advertisement in Oman, the GYTS provides very strong evidence that a total ban on tobacco advertisement is needed. Three in four students saw anti-smoking media messages in the past 30 days. Six in ten of never smokers and eight in ten current smokers saw pro-tobacco messages in newspapers and magazines during the past 30 days. One in ten of both never smokers and current smokers had an object with a cigarette brand logo on and one in ten of both never smokers and current smokers were offered free cigarettes by tobacco company representative. This could be explained by either the total lack of regulation from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and/or that the tobacco companies pay no attention to what ever restriction imposed by the this Ministry and highlights the need for a complete ban on any tobacco promotion as part of a comprehensive ban of advertising.

One in ten of current smokers usually smoke at home. Six times as many female current smokers smoke at home compared to male current smokers (53.2% & 8.4% respectively). These data reveal that there is absence of parental guidance on objection to smoking, which is an important factor to prevent young people from smoking.

Despite a national law banning tobacco sales to minors and single stick sales, still nearly half of youth buy their cigarettes from stores and nine in ten of current smokers stated that they had an access to get cigarettes easily which encourage them to continue smoking.

Conclusion and recommendations

The Oman GYTS 2003, has shown high prevalence of ever smoking among students in age of 13–15. There is an alarming growth in the number of young people who use other types of tobacco especially Shishah and chewing tobacco.

The study highlights the need for an urgent action to curb this epidemic, through a comprehensive national tobacco control legislation and other components like persistent educational messages. Recent, the Gulf Cooperation Council's (GCC) Health Ministers have acted firmly on issues such as tobacco taxation, a move which lead to increase in tobacco prices by almost 50%. Another move was seen by individual states such as the state of Qatar which successfully became the first country to issue a comprehensive

The Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS – Oman)

national tobacco control legislation. As we write these lines, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has also followed the suite. All these efforts were culminated by signing the international tobacco control treaty (The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control) also known as FCTC by three of the seven GCC states (Kuwait, Qatar, and Yemen).

Unfortunately, Tobacco companies play a very strong role in attracting young people in Oman to smoke and still controlling the markets. (promotional activities and advertisements)

The authors recommend the following:

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2. Creation of wide anti-smoking campaigns to focus on prevention of smoking for adolescents.
3. Design and implement cessation program for school based adolescent tailored counseling program and make this more accessible for everyone who wish to quit.
4. Intervention strategies to increase awareness of adults especially parents about the harmful effects of smoking on themselves and their children.
5. Reducing youth access to tobacco products through enforcement of legislations that prevent minors from purchasing cigarettes and other tobacco products and that ban advertisement in mass media.
6. Better use of mass media to increase awareness of the community about the harmful effects of tobacco smoking especially other tobacco products.
7. Further increase in Tobacco taxes.

GYTS should be repeated every 3 years as recommended by WHO and it should be an integral part of the school based surveillance system. This will provide a more comprehensive picture of tobacco- using behavior and related determinants among youth.

References

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