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Cessation services, THR can help end smoking in Pakistan

SUKKUR, March 31: Effective and affordable smoking cessation services along with tobacco harm reduction as part of national tobacco control efforts can help to reduce combustible smoking prevalence in Pakistan.

This was the consensus at a consultation on the situation and role of tobacco harm reduction in addressing the problem of combustible smoking in Pakistan. Arranged by Alternative Research Initiative (ARI), Workers Education and Research Organization (WERO), and NARI Foundation, the consultation was attended by partners from across Sindh.

The participants were informed that Pakistan is facing a heavy burden of disease because of combustible smoking, with nearly 29 million users of tobacco. The total cost of all smoking attributable to diseases and deaths in 2019 in Pakistan was 3.85 billion dollars.

The consultation was told that tobacco harm reduction works as almost all of the disease risk attributable to smoking arises from the smoke: the particles of tar and toxic gases that are inhaled from burning tobacco. If smokers can find satisfactory alternatives to cigarettes that do not involve combustion but do provide nicotine, then they would avoid almost all of the disease risk.

The participants regretted that smokers' concerns have been ignored in Pakistan's tobacco control efforts. Smokers in Pakistan are on their own when it comes to quitting smoking.

If they decide to give up smoking, they don't know where they should seek assistance. That is why less than 3% smokers successfully quit smoking in a year in Pakistan.

The speakers maintained that a smoke-free Pakistan is possible to achieve before 2030 provided the country ensures effective cessation services are accessible and affordable, and the tobacco harm reduction is made part of the national

tobacco control policy. The participants called for engaging health practitioners in cessation efforts to end combustible smoking in a generation. They also called for sensibly regulating innovative tobacco harm products in Pakistan.

Smokers should be part of efforts for a smoke-free future, since their participation in smoking cessation efforts at policy level will provide the critical link for knowing what help they need to quit or switch. All policies formed by

governments must ensure the opinion and needs of smokers are valued in line with Article 14 of FCTC.

ARI is working on ending combustible smoking in a generation. It has established Pakistan Alliance for Nicotine and Tobacco Harm Reduction (PANTHR). While remaining committed to and supporting tobacco control efforts in Pakistan, especially Article 14 of FCTC, PANTHR serves as a platform for advocating and promoting all innovative solutions for ending smoking whether counselling, NRTs, or harm reduction.



Smoking still the biggest public health challenge: Dr Ehsan

In UK, 'No Smoking Day' was observed on Wednesday 9th March, as an annual public health awareness day to help smokers who want to quit.

The first No Smoking Day was back in 1984 and today charities and health bodies across the country use it as an opportunity to raise awareness of the tools on offer to support smokers kick the addiction.

Dr. Ehsan Latif who leads the Health and Science Strategy team at the Foundation for a Smoke-Free World has released a statement to mark the event:

"No Smoking Day is an important opportunity to raise awareness of the continued public health challenge that smoking poses and talk about how people need support to kick the habit.

Quitting smoking is one of the most difficult things to do. Everyone's journey is different and that's why smokers need to be part of the conversation, if they aren't motivated they will not be successful.

In the UK, smokers have access to a broad range of quitting tools from patches to e-cigarettes. But not everyone gets the help they need. In fact, there are smokers in hard to reach communities that suffer from serious health inequalities caused by higher rates of smoking.

Levelling up can't be just about jobs, it needs to be about health too and smoking is still the biggest public health challenge facing the UK and the world today."

<https://finance.yahoo.com/news/no-smoking-day-2022-statement-140900967.html>
Taken from finance.yahoo.com

82 million vapers worldwide in 2021: GSTHR

In 2021, the Global State of Tobacco Harm Reduction (GSTHR) project published the first ever worldwide estimate of the number of vapers, which stood at 68 million in 2020. New data from the February 2021 Eurobarometer 506 survey and other surveys offered a unique opportunity to update that figure. We also modified our projection process by taking both regional variations in market size and the actual year of origin of the underlying data into account. The GSTHR now estimates that there were 82 million vapers worldwide in 2021.

Why are we conducting this research?

Nicotine is one of the world's most popular drugs, alongside alcohol and caffeine. Most people consume nicotine by smoking tobacco cigarettes. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that there are 1.1 billion smokers, about one in five of the global adult population. This figure has remained unchanged since 2000. Decline in the prevalence of smoking in some countries and population groups has been offset by rises elsewhere as well as by population increases. The health effects of smoking tobacco are well known, with an estimate of eight million premature deaths from smoking-related disease each year. This is three times more than the number who die from malaria, HIV and tuberculosis combined.

Options for smokers changed with the invention of the modern electronic cigarette which was patented in 2004. 'E-cigarettes' came onto the market in Europe and North America from around 2007 onwards.

There has been rapid uptake of nicotine vaping products in some countries in Europe and in North America. In the UK the proportion of the adult population using nicotine vaping products rose from 1.7% in 2012 to 7.1% in 2019. Data from the UK suggest a substitution effect, whereby many people

who consume nicotine are choosing safer products. Nicotine vaping products are now the main tool that smokers use when they want to quit cigarettes in England. Research has also shown they are more successful than other methods. Nicotine vaping devices and other safer nicotine products (SNP), including nicotine pouches, snus and heated tobacco products, are potentially disruptive innovations. As such, they have considerable potential to improve population health by displacing tobacco smoking. A key question is the rate at which SNP are replacing tobacco cigarettes. Mapping the uptake of nicotine vaping products is therefore important, but it is extremely difficult for many countries due to the cost.

Global health organisations, vaping product manufacturers and other SNP producers have also neglected the potential of safer nicotine products in low and middle-income countries (LMIC) where 80% of the world's 1.1bn smokers live. With little or no access to smoking cessation support, citizens of LMIC are disproportionately affected by smoking-related death and disease, which under-resourced and overstretched health systems are poorly equipped to diagnose and treat.

Harm reduction options are already being used by an estimated 112 million people worldwide, with approximately 82 million using nicotine vaping devices, 20 million using heated tobacco products and 10 million using US smokeless and snus. To hasten the end of smoking while also helping 1.1bn current smokers switch away from combustible tobacco, harm reduction must become an integral part of the journey towards a smoke-free future.

https://gsthr.org/briefing-papers/82-million-vapers-worldwide-in-2021-the-gsthr-estimate/?fbclid=IwAR1bxWenI-u1-XSY-j-NMKd56wTTPF4R_tY5iaze0VV13tFjvvgI9GCbUs
Taken from gsthr.org

Most e-cigarette research is flawed and in need of urgent critical reform: CoEHAR

Errors are very common in e-cigarette research, resulting in misinformation and distortion of scientific truth. What are the most common flaws in e-cigarette research?

Under the leadership of CoEHAR, a team of international researchers, examined the 24 most frequently cited vaping studies published in medical journals. The findings are shocking: almost all of these studies were found to be methodologically flawed; they lacked a clear hypothesis, used inadequate methodology, failed to collect data relevant to the study objectives, and did not correct for obvious confounding factors.

Scientific research findings must be methodologically valid and sound in order for public health policies to be implemented. Current e-cigarette and heated tobacco product research is widely acknowledged to be poorly designed, conducted and interpreted. As a result, it is impossible to generate balanced and accurate information for the adoption of more effective tobacco control policies and healthier lifestyles. The dissemination of inaccurate information about combustion-free alternatives in the news media contributes to public skepticism and uncertainty, particularly among smokers. Many smokers may be discouraged from switching to less harmful nicotine delivery products as a result of this. A group of international experts collaborated with scientists from CoEHAR, the Center of Excellence for the Acceleration of Harm Reduction at the University of Catania, to publish an in-depth critical evaluation of the most widely quoted e-cigarette research studies.

The research paper titled "Analysis of common methodological flaws in e-cigarette epidemiology research," published in Internal and Emergency Medicine today, exposes the most common errors researchers have made when looking into the health impact of combustion-free nicotine delivery products. Under the guidance of Dr. Cother Hajat of the United Arab Emirates University and prof. Riccardo Polosa, founder of the CoEHAR, the researchers of the study analyzed the 24 most popular vaping studies published in highly authoritative medical journals. The researchers noted a plethora of fatal flaws in these studies; they identified, categorized, and accurately analyzed each mistake.

The authors conclude that the most influential research on e-cigarette is of inadequate quality and insufficient to guide public health decision and they offer practical recommendation for improving research in this field.

"Most of the included studies utilized inappropriate study design and did not address the research question that they set out to answer. In our paper we offer practical recommendations that can massively improve the quality and rigor future research in the field of tobacco harm reduction" explains Dr. Hajat

According to Prof. Polosa: "Systematic reiteration of the same errors that result in uninformative science is the new pandemic! I'm astounded that such low-quality studies have made it through editorial review in prestigious scientific journals. The credibility of tobacco control scientists and their research is on the line."

<https://www.coehar.org/coehar-exposes-for-the-first-time-that-most-e-cigarette-research-is-flawed-and-in-need-of-urgent-critical-reform/>



COEHAR EXPOSES FOR THE FIRST TIME THAT MOST E-CIGARETTE RESEARCH IS FLAWED AND IN NEED OF URGENT CRITICAL REFORM

A team of international researchers examined the 24 most frequently cited vaping studies published in medical journals.

The studies lacked a clear hypothesis, used inadequate methodology, failed to collect data relevant to the study objectives, and did not correct for obvious confounding factors.

"Systematic reiteration of the same errors that result in uninformative science is the new pandemic! I'm astounded that such low-quality studies have made it through editorial review in prestigious scientific journals. The credibility of tobacco control scientists and their research is on the line"
prof. Riccardo Polosa, founder of CoEHAR.



Study looks into implications for benefits and risks of ENDS

A recent study published in the Journal of Clinical Pharmacology, discussed the potential benefits and risks of promoting electronic cigarettes for smoking cessation.

Titled, "Clinical Pharmacology of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS): Implications for Benefits and Risks in the Promotion of the Combusted Tobacco Endgame," the study emphasises the potential of ENDS in promoting smoking cessation while exposing users to lower levels of toxicants in comparison to conventional cigarettes.

The research team highlighted that since nicotine and toxicant delivery vary considerably by device and smokers tend to titrate their nicotine intake to maintain their desired level, device and liquid characteristics should be considered when using ENDS as cessation tools.

Moreover, added the researchers, users should keep in mind that long-term safety of these products remains unknown and there are also the widespread concerns regarding addiction amongst teens.

E-cigarette users were more successful at smoking cessation than non-users

Meanwhile, another recent study titled, "Electronic cigarettes in standard smoking cessation treatment by tobacco counselors in Flanders: E-cigarette users show similar if not higher quit rates as those using commonly recommended smoking cessation aids," looked into the smoking cessation success of smokers who attempted to quit via vaping.

Participants were recruited by tobacco counselors, and followed a smoking cessation treatment (in group) for 2 months. The participants were followed for 7 months after the quit date, and asked to fill out questionnaires and asked to hand in eCO measurements.

"One third of all participants (n = 244) achieved smoking abstinence 7 months after the quit date, with e-cigarette users having higher chances to be smoking abstinent at the final session compared to NRT users," reported the researchers.

<https://www.vapingpost.com/2022/03/18/study-looks-into-implications-for-benefits-and-risks-of-ends/?fbclid=IwAR3QRj8-i-aDOAZUuFAOpWJ8luxXYRMWFjcod7C5nnNimp1vxT1v2cQ0NE>

Cigarettes: on a roll!

Cigarette makers have been on fire lately with rising output. As per calculations based on recent production data from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the reported cigarette production in Pakistan stood at 57 billion sticks during CY21, showing a yearly growth of 16 percent. That's an additional ~8 billion sticks produced last year compared to CY20. This marks one of the sharpest growth spurts for the formal tobacco sector in recent years.

With 4.75 billion cigarette sticks produced on average per month during CY21 (CY20 average: 4.11 billion cigarette sticks per month), the formal players were seen making progress in getting close to their practical capacity to produce 6 billion+ sticks per month. Already in January 2022, the cigarette production had been reported by the PBS at 5.6 billion sticks, a yearly growth rate of 23 percent.

In the past five years, peak production was seen at 6.3 billion sticks in April 2018, as per the PBS data. Whereas the lowest monthly output was reported at 1 billion sticks during June 2019.

Analysis of past five years of data shows that cigarette output often takes wild swings in the months immediately after June. And

June, well, it is the month when federal budget is announced, with changes (increase, decrease or no change) in FED that is levied on cigarettes, thus impacting retail prices of cigarette packs.

Considering sharp swings in output, it is difficult to make full sense of cigarette production data. Smoking is a sticky habit, so one would normally expect low single-digit increase in annual cigarette production (or conversely, one would expect marginal yearly decline in output if there is a gradual trend of folks kicking this habit). In Pakistan's case, there is no confirmed trend of smokers actively disavowing this addiction – in fact, it is generally assumed that the number of smokers is on the rise due to growing youth population. Over the past five years, calculations based on official data show that there was 32 percent year-on-year growth in cigarette output in CY18; this was followed by 15 percent decline in CY19; a further output drop of 5 percent was seen in CY20; a reversal came in CY21, with 16 percent yearly production jump. Such abnormal output growth pattern in a mature industry is mysterious, considering there cannot be



sudden double-digit increase (or decrease) in either the number of smokers or cigarette usage per capita.

The argument that is usually put forth by the formal industry to explain such significant deviations in annual cigarette output mostly revolves around their claims of illicit manufacturers undercutting formal sector sales via cheap, duty-non-paid (DNP) cigarettes. The argument goes that whenever the federal government imposes higher FED on cigarettes, it hurts formal players' competitiveness by expanding their unfavorable retail-price-differential with DNP brands. The higher cigarette output in recent months, therefore, is attributed by industry players to government's

decision to not raise the FED in FY22 budget.

The DNP sector exists, but there is lack of consensus on whether it is large enough to impact formal sector. As per latest information, the top-two tobacco players have recently suggested that the illicit/DNP cigarettes have a 37 percent market share in overall cigarettes that are sold in Pakistan. This claim is contested by anti-smoking campaigners and public health activists, who characterize such lofty

estimates as part of big tobacco's strategy to dissuade government from further raising FED on cigarettes.

Meanwhile, industry fortunes witnessed strong growth last year, as shown in latest financials of the duopoly, Pakistan Tobacco Limited (PSX: PAKT) and Philip Morris Pakistan Limited (PSX: PMPK). During CY21, net turnover grew for PAKT by 23 percent year-on-year to Rs75 billion; for PMPK, it grew by 5 percent year-on-year to Rs17.5 billion. Net profit increased for PAKT by 14 percent year-on-year to Rs19 billion; for PMPK, it expanded by 31 percent year-on-year to Rs2.3 billion.

Let's see what CY22 has in store for the tobacco industry. All eyes will now be on the next budget, which is due in a few months' time. However, the likelihood of an FED hike on cigarette sales currently appears to be low. If that turns out to be the case, it should support cigarette output growth, and, in turn, further boost industry financials for the remainder of this year.

<https://www.brecorder.com/news/40162732>

Established in 2018, ARI is an initiative aimed at filling gaps in research and advocacy on ending combustible smoking in a generation. Supported by the Foundation for A Smoke-Free World (FSFW), ARI established the Pakistan Alliance for Nicotine and Tobacco Harm Reduction (PANTHR) in 2019 to promote innovative solutions for smoking cessation.

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