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WNTD 2022: Making Pakistan smoke free

Alternative Research Initiative (ARI) and its member organizations on the World No Tobacco Day (WNTD) asked the government to provide affordable cessation services and make Tobacco Harm Reduction (THR) part of the national tobacco control policy to make Pakistan smoke free. According to various estimates, the number of tobacco users in the country ranges from 25 to 30 million but less than three percent of the smokers successfully quit smoking in a year. The country needs to overhaul its tobacco control efforts.

displayed at prominent places, including busy intersections and bridges.

Arshad Ali Syed, Project Director ARI, said Pakistan's tobacco control efforts have almost come to a standstill, with some estimates putting the number adult smokers more than 29 million. "Tobacco harm reduction can help Pakistan to reduce its smoking prevalence and in the long run become game-changer in ending combustible smoking." He asked government to make THR part of national tobacco



During the WNTD campaign – Ending smoking from Pakistan is possible – ARI and its member organizations conducted a series of activities, including displaying banners and posters, seminars, walks, orientation sessions and meetings in more than 31 districts across country. ARI and its member organizations displayed banners and posters at prominent places in their cities and posters in their premises carrying ARI's slogans and messages on tobacco control and tobacco harm reduction.

More than 200 banners carrying messages on the provision of affordable cessation services, listening to smokers on what help they need to quit smoking and making THR part of national tobacco control policy to end smoking were

control policy to make Pakistan smoke free. He added that "all risk attributed to smoking arises from Tar in cigarette. If smokers get only nicotine and not the hazardous chemicals then they can protect themselves from the diseases caused by cigarette smoking."

Bunyard, a subsidiary organization of the ARI in Lahore, organized an awareness session at the office premises to highlight the harms of tobacco for health and environment. People in large numbers including men, women and youngsters attended the session. Anjuman Falah-e-Noujwan conducted seminar in Gujranwala to create awareness among masses about risks attributed to cigarette smoking. On the occasion, the speakers asked smokers to quit smoking,

remain healthy and become responsible citizen instead of putting burden on others. They also asked the participants to create and spread awareness about the less harmful alternatives among smokers who wanted and tried to quit smoking but repeatedly failed in giving up the addictive habit.

Daska-based Young Blood Foundation (YBF) also organized a seminar on the hazards of smoking and its prevention. The participants were told to spread awareness about the dangers of smoking for health and ask the smokers to give up smoking. The speakers urged government to provide effective cessation services to smokers to help them in quitting cigarette smoking. Youth Front Pakistan (YFP) in Dera Ghazi Khan organized walking event to highlight the dangers of smoking and importance of avoiding smoking for a healthy life. YFP urged regulations for less harmful THR products to end smoking in Pakistan. Likewise, activities conducted in different cities across the country.

The ARI member organizations which participated in the WNTD activities were Community Development Foundation (CDF), Dareecha Male Health Society (DMHS), Sindh Criminal Prosecution Welfare Association (SCPWA), Private School Association (PSA), Young Blood

Foundation Daska (YBFD), National Disability & Development Forum (NDF), Community Awareness for Unity and Social Empowerment Organization (CAUSE Organization), Sindh Sujag Welfare Association Thatta (SSSWA), National Advocacy for Rights of Innocent Foundation (Nari Foundation), Al-Eimman Development Organization (AEDO), Bunyad Literacy Community Council (BLCC), Community Initiatives Development in Pakistan (CIDP), Community Action for Rural Development Sindh (CARD), Kuchhi Community Development Association (KCDA), Youth Front Pakistan (YFP), Anjuman Ahbab-e- Islam, Workers Education and Research Organization (WERO), Bhaak Welfare Organization (BAKH), Development Institute Network (DIN), Umeed-e-Sahar Muzaffargarh, Citizen Social Welfare Foundation Toba Tek Singh (CSWF), Emaan Foundation Chiniot, Pakistan Social Association Pakpattan (PSA), Anjuman Falah e Noujwanan Waziranbad Gujranwala, Fikr e Farda Welfare organization Chunian (FFWO), Alpha Foundation Kasur, Pakistan Organization for

Sustainable Participatory Development Chunian (POSPaD), Health Way Welfare Society Gujranwala (HWWS) and Hamdard Social Welfare Organization Khairpur.



Tobacco harm reduction matters

Darek Yach

A recent Lancet Editorial about the slow pace of tobacco control around the world singled out the UK as a leader in reducing the number of smokers. It has accomplished this feat, the Editorial stated, through measures such as increased tobacco taxes, comprehensive smoke-free laws in public spaces, and health warnings on product packages.

Yet, there was no mention of alternative nicotine delivery devices, such as e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products, even though strong evidence shows that smokers who used e-cigarettes in combination with in-person counselling were twice as likely to quit as those who used other nicotine replacement products. And this, despite a series of seven reports on vaping published by Public Health England that noted such devices might play a "crucial role in reducing the enormous health burden caused by cigarette smoking".

Indeed, such findings have been welcomed by Action on Smoking and Health, the Royal College of Physicians, and the

National Health Service, the latter of which, as part of an effort to make the UK smoke-free by 2030, is currently

considering adding e-cigarettes to its prescriptions to combat smoking. The Lancet should praise the UK for showing how smoking can become obsolete through approaches that include tobacco harm reduction.

I am a former executive director in the World Health Organization's department of non-communicable diseases, and I had a major role in the development of its international Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. From September, 2017 to October, 2021, I was President and CEO of the Foundation for a Smoke-Free World, a

non-profit entity funded by Philip Morris International, with a mandate to support scientific research and development in the battle against smoking.



[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(22\)00834-0/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(22)00834-0/fulltext)

E-cigarette summit: FDA accused of spreading misinformation

By Alex Norcia

The annual E-Cigarette Summit in Washington, DC, is perhaps the most eclectic conference in tobacco control. Consumer advocates, vape shop owners, academics, researchers, regulators and industry executives all gathered on May 17, as they have for the past several years.

Perhaps more than anything, the conference is a rare opportunity to publicly levy questions at higher-ups in the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), an agency not known for its transparency.

So, it didn't take long for attendees to rise during the Q&A sessions and ask Matthew Holman, the director of the Office of Science at the FDA's Center for Tobacco Products (CTP), and Kathleen Crosby, the director of CTP's Office of Health Communication and Education, why the FDA has continued to communicate so poorly the "continuum of risk"—the idea that some nicotine products are significantly safer than others.

That became the theme for much of the afternoon: Now that the FDA was finally authorizing some vapor products through its often-criticized and onerous premarket tobacco production application (PMTA) process, why was the public still so massively misinformed about e-cigarettes?

Two of the most prominent speakers—David Ashley, a former director of the Office of Science at CTP, and Vaughan Rees, the director of the Center for Tobacco Control at Harvard—both acknowledged that vaping had a place in ending combustible smoking.

Marc Slis, a vape shop owner in Michigan, gave a fiery speech about how the FDA's bureaucracy was driving adults back to cigarettes. Robin Mermelstein, a distinguished professor of psychology at the University of Illinois Chicago, applauded previous tobacco control efforts but urged more nuance in communicating the relative risks among nicotine products. Dr. Jasjit Ahluwalia, a physician and public health scientist at Brown University, referenced a recent study that suggested 60 percent of doctors in the US think nicotine causes cancer, and argued that the FDA wasn't just failing to combat the misinformation, but may even be contributing to it. Since so much public messaging on vapes now revolves around mental health, he pointed out—referencing Crosby's earlier presentation about the FDA's linking nicotine withdrawal to short-term anxiety and depression in its youth prevention campaigns—people might easily start to believe that nicotine is the direct cause of those conditions. Crosby responded that her department is careful to link

short-term anxiety and depression to nicotine withdrawal, not nicotine itself. Yet Ahluwalia urged better messaging, even comparing the FDA's communications with those of the Truth Initiative, the prohibition-leaning nonprofit. Truth has plastered the internet and empty storefront windows with fake advertisements for a "Depression Stick," a satirical vaping product whose name purports to be honest with the user. Clive Bates, former director of the United Kingdom's Action on Smoking and Health, asked panelists if many in tobacco control simply had it backwards—was nicotine not a cause of anxiety and depression, but a treatment?

"Is it ever right to exaggerate risks to get the behavior change you want?" Bates continued, to a round of applause from the audience. "Is it okay to imply, by omission or commission, that vaping is as harmful as smoking just because you want to deter young people from using these products? What's the ethics of doing that—misleading people to get behavior change?" His question was answered not by the FDA representatives, but by Dr. Kevin Gray, a professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the Medical University of South Carolina, who said that nicotine was not a good way to

modulate those unpleasant feelings. In a space intended to open up constructive dialogue, the frustration of the audience—and the panelists—was typically palpable. Slis, the vape show owner, lambasted the PMTA process while sharing a stage with Holman, who repeatedly deflected, implying there was only so much under his and the FDA's control.



"Go down the hill here to the Capitol, because they wrote the law," Holman said. "We have jurisdiction over the product[s] that Congress gave us jurisdiction over, [and] we just got jurisdiction over synthetic nicotine. We didn't choose that. Congress wrote a law, and now we're responsible for implementing it."

Sitting next to Holman on the panel, Bates conceded the point to an extent, but suggested that that FDA has far more space to interpret its implementation of laws—and conduct its communications—in a way that supports harm reduction. "There are a lot of restrictions on what we can say, how we can say it, the process we have to go through in order to say it publicly that are really challenging," Holman said. "And despite what people like you think, we do try our best to communicate that stuff."

"No," Bates deadpanned. "I do think you try your best."

<https://filtermag.org/fda-misinformation-e-cigarette-summit/>

Tobacco control: getting to the finish line

By Robert Beaglehole, Ruth Bonita

Tobacco control is not working for most of the world. Four out of five of the world's smokers are in low-income and middle-income countries. In these countries where most of the eight million deaths caused by tobacco occur each year, rates of tobacco use are falling only slowly. Globally, the overall number of tobacco users has barely changed. Only 30% of countries are on track to achieve the WHO adult tobacco use target of a 30% reduction in prevalence by 2030 and most countries are not on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 3.4 for non-communicable diseases; its achievement will require a much more ambitious tobacco target.

The Lancet stresses the need for greater compliance with the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). The FCTC is no longer fit for purpose, especially for low-income countries. Neither WHO nor the FCTC are grounded in the latest evidence on the role of innovative nicotine delivery devices in assisting the transition from cigarettes to much less harmful products. Equally, the focus on youth vaping, most of which is experimental, detracts from the crucial public health goal of reducing cigarette-caused deaths in adults.

The missing strategy in WHO and FCTC policies is harm reduction. Most people smoke because they are dependent on nicotine. Tobacco harm reduction reduces the harm caused by burnt tobacco by replacing cigarettes with much less harmful ways of delivering nicotine; these alternatives have great potential to disrupt the cigarette industry. Unfortunately, WHO and the FCTC Conference of Parties reject harm reduction. This opposition is not grounded in 21st century technological advances, and is unduly influenced by vested interests who promote nicotine abstinence. This opposition privileges the most harmful products—cigarettes. We urge The Lancet to actively endorse harm reduction as a crucial strategy for reducing the health burden caused by tobacco. The Lancet should also add its voice to calls for an independent review of WHO's tobacco control policies; millions of lives are at stake. We declare no competing interests.

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(22\)00835-2/fulltext?fbclid=IwAR2ko_5kEsOE-bGtghneh4h2r4FRPrIS86iMk1bXR-BMqlj20PE19jxXY14](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(22)00835-2/fulltext?fbclid=IwAR2ko_5kEsOE-bGtghneh4h2r4FRPrIS86iMk1bXR-BMqlj20PE19jxXY14)

Computerised registration of tobacco sellers starts in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: Computerised registration of tobacco sellers was going on in the capital, following which shopkeepers would not be able to sell tobacco products to minors, particularly near educational institutions.

This information was shared with participants by Excise and Taxation Department Director Bilal Azam at an event organised by the department in connection with 'World No Tobacco Day'.

Mr. Azam said over 500 places had been declared smoke-free zones, including public parks, high-rise buildings, public transport and restaurants.

Deputy Commissioner Irfan Memon said: "The Excise Office has conducted record operations against smuggled cigarettes and there is a complete ban on sale of cigarettes in educational institutions. We have introduced a tobacco control law. Other provinces are also going to introduce the Tobacco Vendor Act soon."

Additional Deputy Commissioner Shehryar Arif and a Ministry of National Health Services official, Dr Samra Mazhar, were also present on the occasion.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1692140/computerised-registration-of-tobacco-sellers-being-conducted-in-capital?fbclid=IwAR0SJSelhw9f01mmqbfblacQAJl6vOTwElpBstzTM9Bso-cXvCpxc6ueq0s>

Members Speak

● There is a need for greater engagement between ARI and members. Technology now allows us to be in touch constantly and instantly. Keeping in view the task at hand, we need to discuss how the message of ending smoking in a generation can be disseminated at the local and district levels.

Imran Korai, Zindagi Development Organization, Dadu Sindh

● Pakistan's smoking problem is widespread and huge. For this, collective efforts should be made to convince people that the end of smoking is possible.

Qamar Iqbal Goraya, coordinator Punjab.

● Our cooperation and interaction should go beyond the WNTD. We forget smokers once the WNTD activities are over. I will suggest we should increase our engagement with smokers to convince them to quit for good.

Romas Bhatti, individual member from Hyderabad.

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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