
H. ABSTRACT: PATTERNS OF SMOKING AMONG ALEPPO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Objective. To determine prevalence and explore the risk-influencing factors for smoking among students, as well as attitudes toward smoking. During Aleppo University's *Campaign Against Smoking*, a survey of the students regarding smoking habits and attitudes toward smoking was conducted.

Methods. Of the 60,208 students at Aleppo University, 5.6% (3,378) were surveyed. The survey was conducted among both male and female students.

Results. The survey showed that 35.5% of students are smokers (48.5% male and 12% female). Of the students who are water pipe smokers (WPS), 80.5% are male and 19.5% are female. Despite the fact that the majority of WPS are male, there appears to be increasing numbers of female WPS due to approval of adult family members of this method over cigarette smoking. The majority of students (53.9%) started smoking at university age. Friends were the main factor promoting smoking (51.2%). Other factors promoting smoking included relatives (15.3%) and the media (7.6%). The main reasons listed for quitting smoking were health reasons (52.2%), religious reasons (26.7%), and social reasons (21.2%). Despite the large number of smokers, the study showed that the majority of students (smokers and non-smokers) were annoyed by cigarette smoke and felt that smokers should be secluded to specific areas. Many smokers (45.4%) are dissatisfied with smoking and the majority of smokers (67.8%) would like to quit.

Conclusions. Interventions targeting students before they reach university age may reduce the number of smokers, since this is the age that students primarily begin smoking. These interventions should address issues such as the influence of friends, health problems associated with smoking and prevention of relapse. It also appears that the majority of students, including those who smoke, support the banning of smoking in certain public areas.

I. ACTIVE AND PASSIVE SMOKING DURING PREGNANCY IN ALEPPO, SYRIA: DOES IT AFFECT THE OUTCOME?

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Background. Smoking during pregnancy is known to be associated with premature births and low birth weights. However, limited data is known about the attitude and beliefs regarding smoke exposure or the effect of active and passive smoking during pregnancy on newborn babies in Aleppo, Syria.

Methods. Three thousand pregnant women who delivered at Aleppo University Hospital for Obstetrics and Gynecology were studied. Each woman answered a questionnaire about smoking and environmental tobacco exposure (ETS). Weight, length, head circumference, as well as gestational age assessment, were measured for the newborns.

Subjects. Mothers were divided into four groups: non-smoking (NS) mothers ($n=1000$), active smoking (AS) mothers during pregnancy ($n=850$), active smoking (ASC) mothers who quit during pregnancy ($n=150$) and passive smoking (PS) mothers during pregnancy ($n=1000$).

Results. Infants born to mothers in the AS and PS groups had significantly ($P<.05$) lower birth weight, shorter birth length and smaller head circumference in addition to a significantly higher incidence of premature birth, compared to infants born to mothers in the NS group. There was no significant difference in birth weight, birth height, head circumference or the incidence of premature birth between infants born to mothers in the ASC group and the NS group.

Conclusion. Our data confirmed past reports on the negative effect of smoking during pregnancy on the newborn. In addition, it emphasized the need for education and awareness of these findings, as well as changing attitudes and beliefs related to active and passive smoking among spouses and family members of pregnant women in Aleppo, Syria.
