

Effective smoking prevention among youth essential to successful tobacco control

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The US Surgeon General's report released in 2014 has shown numerous adverse health effects of cigarette smoking, including a number of cancers, cardiovascular diseases, and other chronic diseases.¹ The list of new diseases causally linked to cigarette smoking is growing rapidly, with new conditions being added to this list almost every month.

Cigarette smoking among youth has a number of adverse health consequences, including lifelong nicotine dependence.² The negative effects of tobacco use go beyond short- and long-term devastating health consequences; cigarette smoking is known to compromise family budget and cause negative economic impacts at the community, regional, and national levels.

Effective smoking prevention among youth is essential for successful tobacco control. Cigarette smoking prevention must focus on children and adolescents because it is the life period when the majority of regular and heavy smokers start their lifelong smoking career.²

It is impossible to design effective and sustainable tobacco prevention measures without detailed knowledge of the key risk factors leading to smoking initiation among adolescents. The article by Nosa et al.³ describes one of the first studies shedding some light on the current smoking rates among Pacific children and adolescents at the intermediate school level. Importantly, this article highlights the key risk factors for smoking initiation among these young individuals.

Although based on the cross-sectional investigation, which may be considered as a limitation of this study, the authors reported risk factors for smoking initiation among Pacific youth in New Zealand. Most of these risk factors are quite well-

known (e.g. exposure to smokers in the household or larger amounts of pocket money); however, certain risk factors are not as commonly reported—among them, exposure to smoking in the car within the previous seven days, and being male. The authors rightfully concluded that primary health care providers ought to address cigarette smoking at home and in the car by adult family members, as well as monitoring their children's pocket money availability. The article by Nosa et al. may provide important clues for designing effective educational programmes aimed at parents of intermediate school students in the Pacific population in New Zealand. Such programmes are likely to constitute an important component of the comprehensive approaches to smoking prevention among children and adolescents, combining public education, smokefree policies, mass media campaigns, tobacco price increases, and other measures.

References

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