

Knowledge, attitudes and perception of dental patients on oral health risks associated with cigarette smoking

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Abstract

Introduction: The tobacco industry is a thriving international business, despite the adverse health effects related to tobacco use.

Objectives: The objective of the study was to assess the knowledge, attitudes and perceptions of cigarette smokers and non-smokers on the health risks associated with cigarette smoking.

Methodology: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted to assess 200 dental patients visiting the University of Nairobi Dental Hospital. An interviewer administered questionnaire was administered to patients awaiting treatment at the oral diagnosis clinic.

Results: Seventy five of the respondents were current smokers, 25 ex-smokers and 100 were non-smokers. All were male, aged between 20 and 79 with the largest group falling within the 20-39 age bracket for both the current smokers and non-smokers. However, the mode age group for the ex-smokers was 40-49. The respondents exhibited some knowledge on the general as well as oral health risks associated with smoking with majority (smokers, ex-smokers and non-smokers respectively) relating the habit to lung cancer (15.8%, 31% and 13%), cancer of the mouth (13%, 21% and 14.8%) and chronic cough (13%, 16.7% and 10.8%) for the general health risks. Staining of teeth (28.1%, 34.3% and 27.2%), bad smell, cavities (23.5%, 22.9% and 24.6%) and gum disease (17.8%, 22.9% and 19.8%) was recorded on oral health risks.

Conclusions: There was satisfactory knowledge on the health risks of smoking. However there was a poor attitude of smokers towards cessation of the habit as a majority of them strongly believed in reduced health risk products. Aggressive anti-tobacco campaigns should be implemented especially to the youth to enlighten them on oral and general health risks associated with smoking.

Key Words: tobacco use, health risks, knowledge.

Introduction

Studies have shown that more than 50% of Kenyan adult males use tobacco in at least one of its various forms¹. Efforts to educate the public on the hazardous effects of tobacco use have largely been frustrated by aggressive marketing campaigns mounted by tobacco companies. Strategies for expansion of tobacco markets include aggressive marketing to the youth and women and the introduction of modified tobacco products claiming to reduce the risk of smoking (potential reduced exposure products, PREPs) such as 'low tar' or light cigarettes which encourage the perception of

'safer tobacco'².

Tobacco is smoked in numerous ways including cigarettes, cigars, pipes, water pipes (shish or hookah) and 'bidi' (Tobacco wrapped in tambourine leaf). Reverse smoking, which is smoking with the burning end of the cigarette in the mouth, is a common practice in rural Africa and India. Smokeless tobacco is found in the form of chewing tobacco and snuff provides an alternate mode of consumption. In Kenya the forms of traditional tobacco used include "Kiraiku", which is a raw, hand rolled tobacco as well various formulations of snuff³.

The harmful effects of tobacco use on systemic and

