

World Health Organization: Do we have to intensify global tobacco control efforts?

Sir,

Globally, consumption of tobacco account for 6 million deaths every year, and has been acknowledged as one of the leading public health concerns threatening the mankind.^[1] Furthermore, close to 80% of the world's smokers are from low- and middle-income countries, and it is anticipated that the number of deaths can increase up to 8 million by the year 2030, in the absence of effective public health interventions.^[1,2]

Recognizing the magnitude of the problem and its impact on different aspects of an individual/family/society, the World Health Organization has developed a Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), which was thoroughly supported by the member states.^[2,3] The FCTC target was to reduce the global consumption of tobacco by 30% by the year 2025 and to achieve the same, MPOWER (viz. Monitor tobacco use and prevention policies; Protect people from tobacco use; Offer help to quit tobacco use; Warn about the dangers of tobacco; Enforce bans on tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship; and Raise taxes on tobacco), was introduced in the year 2008.^[3]

In fact, in Iran, multiple indicators targeting policy makers, stakeholders, and the community, have been developed to evaluate the implementation of FCTC.^[4] A wide range of studies have been performed to assess the utility of telephone interactive voice-response tobacco cessation support service; and opinion of general population regarding smoking scenes in movies; hence that awareness among stakeholders regarding tobacco control can be enhanced.^[5,6]

Although, recent estimates reflect a gradual decline in the rate of tobacco usage, only 37 nations are expected to achieve 30% tobacco reduction as initially set for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases.^[2] This has been attributed to the wider challenges and obstacles identified in different settings such as poor awareness among the general population about the adverse effects associated with tobacco consumption, especially in low-resource settings; legal hurdles; poor surveillance activities; absence of effective measures to facilitate reduction in tobacco demand; lack of

measures to protect people from tobacco smoke or to extend adequate help to quit tobacco use; and no strict enforcement of bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship.^[2,3,7]

In order to intensify the global efforts to counter the tobacco epidemic, it is important to realize that adequate monitoring and thorough surveillance is the key to modify the existing policies in the local settings, and that second-hand smoke can kill both adults and children.^[1,2] In addition, implementation of other measures like extending help to quit consumption of tobacco by offering them counseling and medications; organizing periodic awareness campaigns preferably in the local language of the residents; consistent display of pictorial warnings on tobacco products; enforcing ban on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship related activities; and raising taxes on tobacco products to discourage its usage.^[2,3,7,8]

In conclusion, it is the need of the hour that policy makers should intensify the tobacco control efforts and work in a concerted manner along with other stakeholders to constantly improve the tobacco control.

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

SRS contributed in the conception or design of the work, drafting of the work, approval of the final version of the manuscript, and agreed for all aspects of the work. PSS contributed in the literature review, revision of the manuscript for important intellectual content, approval of the final version of the manuscript, and agreed for all aspects of the work. JR contributed in revising the draft, approval of the final version of the manuscript, and agreed for all aspects of the work.

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