



## Every Heart Matters: Quit Tobacco (World No Tobacco Day Guest Comment)

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It is my pleasure to be writing this editorial for the International Healthcare Research Journal (IHRJ) on the occasion of “World No Tobacco Day”.

480,000 are the number of deaths recorded annually because of cigarette smoking alone in the United States and about 41000 resulting from passive smoking.<sup>1</sup> An alarming colossal number, and this is in just the United States and only one form of tobacco, I am certain that the global numbers are manyfolds. Despite numerous attempts and awareness campaigns we are struggling to put this plaque to rest. Amongst many endeavours driven by WHO, May 31<sup>st</sup> is marked as the “World No Tobacco Day” to spread awareness and advocate desistance from tobacco. Tobacco reduces the quality of life as well as the life expectancy, on an average a non-smoker lives about 10 more years than a smoker.<sup>2</sup> It is the root cause of many diseases which affect the oral cavity to cardiovascular system; the latter was less talked about until this year as WHO chose the theme “tobacco breaks hearts” focusing on the link between tobacco and cardiovascular disease. Tobacco affects the cardiovascular system adversely and significantly by various means, to name a few- it increases the bad cholesterol in your body, makes your blood thicker predisposing it to increased formation of clots, damages the cell lining of the blood vessels, narrows the blood vessels so on and so forth. Tobacco is the second leading cause of cardiovascular disease after hypertension as stated by the American Cancer Society.

As dentists we come across very unaesthetic clinical representation of the tobacco use from cancers which cause disfiguration of the face to even death. It is surprising that mostly the first few signs and symptoms of diseases caused by tobacco are evident in the oral cavity. We play our part by educating them and helping undo the atrocious effects of tobacco. Why do we want to endanger our lives and the ones we love for momentary satisfaction. Tobacco is an empty habit and highly

addictive. Why shorten your life expectancy yourself when refraining from certain substances and adopting healthy lifestyle choice can help and prevent disease. Tobacco use is an active choice an individual can make and improve their way of living and also the ones who are dear to them. Tobacco deaths render families helpless which could have been easily prevented by one simple choice of “quitting”. Although various campaigns, advertisements aim to make the general population aware of the risk factor and adverse effects of tobacco, it doesn't seem to suffice given the number of deaths we looked upon. It cannot be neglected that tobacco is amongst the strongest lobbies in the world and eradicating it shall not be easy.

I strongly believe that the measures need to be taken at organisational as well individual level. Establishment of more tobacco free or smoking free zones, more vivid pictorial representation of the implications of tobacco use imprinted on every tobacco product, perhaps increased taxation on tobacco products. Awareness process should commence at school levels as well by the means of short films and posters.

The WHO MPOWER measures seem very promising:

- Monitor tobacco use and prevention policies;
- Protect people from exposure to tobacco smoke by creating completely smoke-free indoor public places, workplaces and public transport;
- Offer help to quit tobacco (cost-covered, population-wide support, including brief advice by health care providers and national toll-free quit lines);
- Warn about the dangers of tobacco by implementing plain/standardized packaging, and/or large graphic health warnings on all tobacco packages, and implementing effective anti-tobacco mass media campaigns that inform the public about the harms of tobacco use and second-hand smoke exposure.

- Enforce comprehensive bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship; and
- Raise taxes on tobacco products and make them less affordable.<sup>3</sup>

More stringent actions are required against the individuals who violate the smoking restrictions to set examples. As individuals we have the most influential role to play, protecting and educating our friends and families, encouraging and supporting them to quit, it may be a rocky road but it is worth it. It is the time to reflect and make the much needed amendments. We can help save lives with little effort.

## REFERENCES

1. [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/fast\\_facts/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fast_facts/index.htm) [last accessed 7<sup>th</sup> April 2018].
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