



World No Tobacco Day 2023: Short Commentary

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The relationship between tobacco use and health is a topic widely studied among researchers in recent decades in which lung cancer came out to be the first disease that is definitively linked to tobacco use. Cancer, cardiovascular diseases and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease continue to be the main health issues that are associated with cigarette smoking.¹ Tobacco is one of the major risk factors for periodontitis and oral cancer. Many research evidence suggests that smokers have greater tendency to problems such as teeth and alveolar bone loss and gingival recession compared to non-smokers, and to the formation of periodontal pockets, which increase the probability of having more severe periodontal disease.²

Apart from its adverse health effects, tobacco and its associated products also considerably impact environment. Cigarette litter or cigarette waste is one of the major environmental contaminant, as trillions of cigarettes are smoked worldwide and a greater part of cigarette waste, is disposed of in the open areas including roads, parks, and streets. Cigarette litter is the most commonly found litter. This cigarette litter basically contains cigarette filter made of cellulose acetate and unburnt part of cigarette filter. Filters from smoked cigarettes contains significant amount of tar. The tar contains thousands of heavy metals and chemicals. These constituents have been reported to be toxic to humans that can cause a variety of diseases including inflammatory lung diseases, cardiovascular diseases and cancers. Cigarette litter is a major concern to the environment as the chemicals and heavy metals contained in the waste leach into the soil and water sources and pose threat to animals and plants, from there they could

also enter into the food chain.³

Dental professionals are well positioned to provide tobacco cessation treatment to their patients. Not only dental professionals come across large number tobacco users, but they often have more time to interact with patients and see patients more regularly than other health professionals do. The five A's approach to tobacco cessation (Ask, Advise, Assess, Assist and Arrange) is an evidence based intervention supported by several countries and organizations, including the World Health Organization.⁴

It has been estimated that Tobacco consumption is going to kill more than 1000 million people in 21st century. Considering the above stats, the World Health Organization started the Tobacco Free Initiative (TFI) in 1998. The mission of the WHO TFI's is to reduce the global burden of disease and death caused by tobacco, thereby protecting present and future generations from the devastating health, social, environmental and economic consequences of tobacco use and exposure to tobacco smoke.⁵

The Member States of the World Health Organization started World No Tobacco Day in 1987, to draw worldwide attention to the tobacco epidemic and its associated adverse health effects. In 1987, the World Health Assembly passed a resolution, calling for 7th April 1988 to be a "world no-smoking day." In 1988, another resolution was passed, according to which, World No Tobacco Day is celebrated every year on 31st May.⁶

The theme for this year's World No Tobacco Day 2023 is "Grow food, not tobacco." This campaign



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encourages governments across the globe to end tobacco farming and encourage and support farmers to switch to more sustainable crops that improve food security and nutrition.⁶

The main objectives of this campaign are:

1. Mobilize governments to end subsidies on tobacco growing and use of savings for crop substitution programmes.
2. Raise awareness among tobacco farming communities about the benefits of shifting from tobacco farming to other crop farming.
3. Support efforts to combat desertification and environmental degradation by decreasing tobacco farming;
4. Expose industry efforts to obstruct sustainable livelihoods work.

This day is celebrated to create awareness globally regarding adverse effects of tobacco products in general and oral health. Not only health effects, this day also aims to make people acquainted with harmful effects of tobacco smoke and cigarette litter on environment. Globally, governments are encouraged to motivate their farmers to shift cultivation of tobacco to more useful crops.

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