Research Report

Leiden Model United Nations 2017
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Forum: *World Health Assembly*
Issue: *Controlling and reducing tobacco consumption*

Position: *President*

Introduction

"Giving up smoking is the easiest thing in the world. I know because I've done it thousands of times." - Mark Twain

Smoking can kill you. We've known that for at least 50 years - and yet millions still smoke, and thousands more pick up the habit every year. Study after study shows a connection between cigarettes and numerous health problems and so why do we choose to turn a blind eye on it? And as smoking prevalence rates have declined in the traditional markets of North America and Western Europe, the tobacco industry has re-focused its promotional efforts onto the less developed and emerging nations in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the former Soviet Union and Latin America. And knowing that the tobacco industry contributes to the agricultural, fiscal, manufacturing, and exporting sectors of the economy makes it even harder to stop.

Definition of Key Terms

Tobacco
Herb in which the leaves are cured and then prepared, ready for chewing or smoking. It contains a wide range of substances such as nicotine.

Nicotine
A highly powerful drug contained in cigarette smoke. It is highly addictive and stimulates both the brain and the body. It causes a wide range of effects on the body which include increased heart rate, raised blood pressure and reduced oxygen intake.

Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)
A collective name for anti-smoking treatments which contain a set nicotine dosage. These are designed to ease cravings and withdrawal symptoms caused by stopping smoking.

World No Tobacco Day
First introduced by the World Health Organisation (WHO) back in 1987. It aims to raise awareness of the negative impact of tobacco in all corners of the globe.

Addiction
A physical and/or mental state in which you are dependent on a substance or activity, and have no control over that state.

Snuff
A form of tobacco powder which is inhaled through the nose rather than smoked.

Roll up
A type of cigarette which is prepared at home. The smoker rolls a portion of tobacco in a cigarette paper and moistens one side to seal it.

Second hand smoke
Another name for passive smoking: this is smoke breathed out into the environment which is inhaled by a non-smoker. There is evidence to show that it leads to a range of disease such as heart disease and cancer.

Mainstream smoke
A type of smoke which is inhaled by the smoker as they puff on a cigarette.

Sidestream smoke
A type of smoke which travels up into the air from the burning end of a cigarette.

Tar
A black, sticky substance found in cigarettes.

General Overview

The key to tackling this issue is understanding why people smoke in the first place. First of all, one of the major factors making people start smoking is peer pressure. Smokers don't want to smoke alone and non-smokers don't want to be seen as people afraid of push their boundaries. It works exceptionally well with young people who are most susceptible to influence. Teenagers also have a natural temptation to break the rules and push the limits, thus seeing a no-smoking sign or a nasty photo on a pack of tobacco often makes them want to reach for a cigarette even more. Unsurprisingly, children of active smokers are more likely to start smoking than children of nonsmokers, or children of parents who quit smoking, which only proves that authority figures should always set the best possible example for the young.

Also, as absurd as it might sound, smoking helps to bound. When a bunch of people, for instance at the workplace or at school, do smoking breaks at the same time they participate in a group activity which may actually make them feel more accepted and bring them closer to each other as they find a common ground. And since nicotine users report a range of positive effects that result from smoking it's very easy for them to stick to this habit. Smoking might help them reduce appetite, relieve form pain and stress or even make them feel better mentally. Of course, nicotine can solve these problems only temporarily and at the same time causes a bunch of very dangerous side effects, so at the end of the day it's still not worth it at all.

Moreover, there are still many misconceptions around smoking and its effects on health living in people's minds, caused by years of advertising tobacco in the media, which turned out to be a very powerful tool in shaping public opinion (e.g. joe camel, marlboro man), and too little access to education and knowledge in less developed countries.

So even though smoking often seems innocent at the beginning it all comes down to one thing – addiction. And not only does it concern the person who smokes, but basically everyone around. Because who wants to be a second hand smoker? And we cannot forget that very often whole families suffer financially because of it, as the amount of money they spend on cigarettes every week, month or even year, in a bigger picture can make their life standard lower.

So how does it even work and why is it so hard to get rid of this lethal habit?
People tend to make up hundreds of excuses why they can't quit – they're too stressed, they're still young, they will die anyway... But the situation is a lot more nuanced than that. The moment someone gets addicted, he or she stops thinking rationally and even though they may have an illusion that they are in control of it, it's simply not true. As I mentioned earlier one of the main reasons smokers keep smoking is nicotine. Over time, your system gets used to inhaling nicotine. However, the more you smoke, the more nicotine you need to feel normal. When someone tries to cut back on nicotine he might end up feeling uncomfortable and craving it - this is called withdrawal. Shortly after you finish smoking a cigarette, your body starts to crave another cigarette to overcome these symptoms, starting a vicious cycle of dependency. Most physical signs of withdrawal disappear after a few days, up to a week, but it might take a little longer to get rid of cigarette cravings.

Timeline of Events

Around 0 BC	People begin to chew and smoke tobacco during cultural or religious ceremonies,
1531	Tobacco is first cultivated in Europe. It quickly gains popularity across the continent and is being used as a monetary standard.
1700s	Smoking is extremely popular and the tobacco industry has developed significantly.
1800s	Cigarette making machines are developed.
1920s	The first medical reports linking smoking to lung cancer begin to appear. Many newspapers refuse to report these findings as they are afraid to insult tobacco companies, which advertises heavily in the media.

1950s and 1960s	A series of medical reports confirm tobacco causes a range of serious diseases.
20th century	Cigarette smoking grows more popular, despite medical reports proving its health risks.

Previous Attempts to solve the issue

On 21st of May 2003 at the 56th World Health Assembly, WHO's 192 Member States unanimously adopted the world's first public health treaty - the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. Negotiated under the auspices of WHO, this new treaty is the first legal instrument designed to reduce tobacco-related deaths and disease around the world.

Tobacoo Free Initiatives (TFI):

World No Tobacco Day, 31 May 2017 – an event initiated by WHO promoting health and development by confronting the global tobacco crisis. This year's theme is "Tobacco – a threat to development."

The WHO report on the global tobacco epidemic 2017 which tracks the status of the tobacco epidemic and interventions to combat it. The report focuses on monitoring tobacco use and prevention policies and includes in-depth analysis of monitoring capacity of WHO Member States
The Economics of Tobacco and Tobacco Control - a new study published by the US National Cancer Institute and WHO that show highly cost-effective measures exist to control the health and economic impacts of tobacco.

Possible Solutions

It is now widely agreed that in order to substantially reduce smoking rates, governments need to adopt a comprehensive approach to tobacco control. Tobacco control programs aim to reduce disease, disability, and death related to tobacco use. A comprehensive approach - one that includes educational, clinical, regulatory, economic, and social strategies, is the only way to combat the problem. In order to do that, member states should implement the following actions:

- A total ban on tobacco advertising and promotion
- Restrictions on smoking in public places and in the workplace
- Sustained increases in tobacco taxation combined with measures to curb smuggling
- Large, bold health warnings on tobacco products;
- Smoking cessation and health education campaigns;
- The regulation of tobacco to standards agreed by the health community rather than those set by the tobacco industry.

Appendix/Appendices

http://www.medic8.com/healthguide/smoking/glossary.html

http://health.howstuffworks.com/wellness/smoking-cessation

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