

Tobacco: A Serious Threat to the Development of a Nation

Dear Editor,

Globally, consumption of tobacco in any form accounts for the deaths of >7 million people each year and results in a significant financial burden on the nation in terms of health-care expenditures and loss of productivity.^[1] It has been anticipated that by ensuring tobacco control, almost 33% of deaths attributed to noncommunicable diseases can be minimized by 2030.^[1]

Apart from being a serious threat to the maintenance of an optimal state of health and well-being, tobacco casts a serious impact on the development of a nation on every level by affecting different sectors.^[1-3] In fact, the process of growing (as it involves deforestation, use of fertilizers/pesticides), manufacture (production of millions of tonnes of solid waste), and trade or consumption (>10 billion cigarettes are disposed daily) plays a crucial role in the deterioration of the environment.^[1]

Moreover, its farming prevents children from attending schools, and at the same time exposes them to unsafe chemical products.^[1,2] On a similar note, women are also immensely at the risk of an adverse health outcome as they alone account for 7 out of 10 people working in the tobacco industry.^[1] It is important to understand that poor people are maximum affected, which further increases the existing poverty.^[1] This is predominantly because of the significant proportion of the household income spent on the purchase of tobacco products, and thus, there is a shortage of money for other essential things such as food, or availing health care or education.^[1,2]

All the above consequence, clearly indicate that tobacco control no more is limited to the prevention of occurrence of different types of noncommunicable diseases, but is a major threat to the development of a nation.^[1] The good thing about tobacco control is that the stakeholders are having powerful options to battle against the tobacco epidemic, in the form of the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.^[2-5] This framework has legal provisions to impose a ban on the advertisement, promotion, and sponsorship of tobacco.^[2,4] In addition, it enables display of warning about the harmful effects of tobacco use, implementation of additional taxes, and protection of people from exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke.^[4,5] Furthermore, the government can expand the reach of services to aid people in quitting tobacco, and even adopt innovative approaches to deal with tobacco use.^[2,4]

To conclude, in the battle against tobacco epidemic, the best thing is that every one of us can play our part in minimizing tobacco consumption and thus facilitate the development of the nation.

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There are no conflicts of interest.

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