The Prevalence of Smoking Among Medical Residents in Saudi Arabia, A Cross Sectional National Survey

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ABSTRACT

In this cross-sectional study, we investigated the prevalence of smoking among medical residents. In addition, we explored the knowledge, risk factors, and cessation attempts related to smoking. This was a cross-sectional study conducted through an online questionnaire in Saudi Arabia from November 2020 to December 2020. All resident physicians in Saudi Arabia were eligible to participate in the study. This study used a convenience sample to recruit the study population. The questionnaire was distributed data among residents via google forms. The forms were sent to residents' emails that are registered in the Saudi Commission for Health Specialties Fagerstrom Test for Nicotine Dependence and Lebanon Waterpipe Dependence Scale (LWDS-11) were used in this study. Chi-square comparison of categorical data, ANOVA to compare means of continuous variables were used. Multivariate logistic regression was conducted to verify demographic, lifestyle, work-related factors' effect on smoking habit using FTND and/or LWDS-11 scales. A p-value ≤ 0.05 was considered statistically significant. A total of 457 medical residents have participated in this study. Of the 157 participants who reported that they are current smokers, 47.7% reported that they smoke cigarettes. 75.2% of the study sample reported they smoke during working hours. The most commonly reported reasons for starting smoking were to relieve stress and anxiety and/or that it was started as with a trial then continued with 47.1% and 36.9%, respectively. The mean FTND score for the study participants was 0.63 (SD: 1.8). Using multiple linear regression analysis, we found that, older age was associated with having a higher FTND score (p=0.009). Male residents were more likely to have higher FTND scores compared to females (p< 0.001). This study demonstrates that smoking habit is not uncommon among medical residents, despite their perceived social image and role in smoking prevention and cessation. High level of stressors, anxiety and depression are among the most predisposing factors leading to high prevalence of smoking.

Keywords: Smoking, Health care workers, Saudi Arabia, Tobacco, Survey.

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