

## SMOKING: HEALTH EDUCATION AND PROMOTION IN THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

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### ABSTRACT

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the birthplace of Islam and Islam prohibits the use of any substance which might harm health. On the basis of number of studies conducted in the Kingdom, the proportion of smokers in Saudi Arabia is nearly 35 to 45% among adult males, 24 % in preparatory schools' male students and 8 % in female students. The social, health and economic burden of tobacco use, costs the Kingdom up to 5 billion Riyals per year (1.3 billion US\$).<sup>1</sup> The Kingdom is the top Arabian tobacco importer with Iran in second place, Jordan third, Turkey fourth, Morocco fifth and Egypt in sixth place, also the Kingdom pays more than 1.7 billion Riyals (453 million US \$) to import tobacco per year. Saudi Arabia is the world's 23<sup>rd</sup> leading consumer of cigarettes despite its small population.<sup>2</sup> More than 15 billion cigarettes worth US \$ 1.3 billion are smoked by Saudis per year,<sup>3</sup> and estimated 23,000 deaths per year in the Kingdom due to smoking. Apart from these huge deaths related to smoking, the major population of the Kingdom is suffering from the consequences of smoking or smoking related diseases like cancers, cardiac illnesses, bronchitis, and lung diseases.

### Objective

To study the need and urgency of health education, promotion and awareness among both the genders to reduce the smoking habits in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

### Methodology

It is an observation and review of literature method, in which the primary data was collected by direct observations and secondary data, was collected from the MOH statistical year books, all papers published in english language in national and international relevant journals. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports, related government articles, MOH reports on smoking policy, production, trade, industry, and consumption, health promotion, awareness, and education are also reviewed.

### Results

There is lack of health education, awareness and promotion on smoking in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

### Conclusion

Cigarette smoking is an important public health problem in Saudi Arabia. A more intense and comprehensive

tobacco control effort is needed including the health education, promotion and awareness on smoking by the public, private and other sectors, and to reduce the extra burden of cost to treat the smoking related diseases in the Kingdom.

**KEYWORDS:** Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), Ministry of Health (MOH), Smoking, Tobacco, Health Education, Health Promotion