

KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS SMOKING
IN PATIENTS ATTENDING OUT PATIENT DEPARTMENTS
OF FIVE GENERAL HOSPITALS IN SRI LANKA

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An investigation was carried out to assess the level of knowledge and attitudes towards smoking in a sample of 1648 patients who attended the out patient departments of the General Hospitals in Anuradhapura (767), Kandy(343), Nuwara Eliya (68), Kurunegala (222) and Jaffna (248). As the prevalence of smoking among females is very low, in keeping with our cultural habits, only males were studied and a questionnaire was administered to males over 20 years of age.³ Of the total sample examined 1123 were smokers and 525 were non smokers. The prevalence of smoking in the sample was 68%. Of the respondents 62% of the smokers and 38% of the non smokers agreed with the statement that "smoking is harmful to health." This difference is statistically significant ($P < .001$). 74% of patients (62% of smokers and 12% of non smokers)₂ were very concerned about the harmful effects of smoking on their health. Among the current smokers 9% never tried to stop smoking while 80% tried to stop at some stage during their smoking history. 2% of those who stopped the smoking habit resumed smoking shortly afterwards. The replies to the open ended question "who advised you against smoking" varied. The replies to this question in order of frequency were doctors (14.95%), parents and family members (10.86%), friends and acquaintances(6.31%) mass media (2.85%) and (2.42%) wives. 62% of the patients were not advised against smoking. About 89.50% of patients (62% of smokers and 27% of non smokers) agreed that every body has the right to breath air which is free of tobacco smoke. 95% of patients (66.62% of smokers and 28.82% of non smokers) agreed that the most effective and desirable form of regulation is to ban smoking in closed public places and to ban on advertising of tobacco. This study shows that two thirds of the smokers studied are aware of the health risks of smoking. Therefore, appropriate counselling can be offered.

References:

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