

Shisha Abuse in Young Adults

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Madam, I would like to draw the attention of the Ministry of Health to look into a precious health problem. There is an alarming new trend of smoking among young people. It is not cigarettes but shisha also known as water pipes. Shisha is being served at most public places: including parks, gardens as well as at restaurants and coffee shops. Study has shown that a single session of smoking shisha produces carbon monoxide (CO) levels four to five times higher than that produced from smoking a cigarette. It also causes health problems like Tuberculosis, Herpes, Asthma, oral cancer as well as infections such as common cold and flu due to the hose shared by others¹.

There is a common myth about water-pipes that there is a passage of smoke through the steaming water in water-pipes that 'purifies' the smoke of all harmful elements. It has now been established through both the local and foreign studies that the commonly believed 'filtration' mechanisms of water-pipe are nothing but a sham and serum CO and Nicotine after water-pipe smoking rises to the level that is almost comparable to those measured after cigarette abuse.

It is a sad fact that 1 out of every 5 Pakistani has consumed more than 100 cigarettes/beedis or chillum/hookah (all different forms of tobacco abuse) in his lifetime. Encouragingly, there is a realization of the threat at the government level and

Tobacco control is one of the strongest components of National Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NAP-NCD)².



Fig.1 Shows a young person smoking shisha at a public place from a water pipe.



Fig. 2. Shows a young person inhaling smoke.

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A documentation of rural and urban water-pipe providers should be initiated. An exploration into general community's knowledge and attitude towards water-pipe smoking is the need of the hour. The proposed rule would give the FDA additional tools to protect the public health in today's rapidly evolving tobacco marketplace, including the review of new tobacco products and their health-related claims³. The Government should start scrutinizing the existing Shisha cafes and ensure that only adults should have an access to water-pipe smoking. The existing country-wide anti-smoking campaigns should be expanded to include hookah and shisha into their focus. A discouragement of the practice at this stage would make certain that the

evil is eliminated before it actually sets its roots into our social norms as it has in the Arab world.

References

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