



Research Article

CURRENT TRENDS OF TOBACCO CONSUMPTION IN NORTH INDIA: A DETAILED SURVEY

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ABSTRACT

Background: Oral Cancer is emerging as the most common type of cancer. Its aspects were tried to be studied on the basis of the results obtained from health camps. Objectives: To perform a detailed survey of Oral cancer spread in Kanpur zone irrespective of the causative factors behind it. Methods: The data were collected on the basis of the age groups, reasons behind the addiction, years of tobacco consumption, profession of the people addicted and the forms of tobacco in which it is consumed. Result: It was observed that the tobacco is consumed majorly in the form of gutkhas, mostly by the manual labour and the unemployed people. Stress is the major reason found behind it. Conclusion: People should be made educated and aware regarding the ill effects caused by tobacco on health.

Keywords: Oral Cancer, Tobacco, Gutkhas, Stress, Awareness.

INTRODUCTION

Tobacco and alcohol are the most important causative factors behind the cancer of oral cavity. Approximately 90% of people with mouth cancer are tobacco users. One should never start smoking or chew tobacco in any form in order to avoid these cancers¹. Oral cancer is one of the most common non communicable diseases with worldwide occurrence with an estimated increase of 275,000 new cases each year. Oral cancer is the term used for cancers that form in the tissues of oral cavity (the mouth) or the oropharynx (the part of the throat at the back of the mouth). These along with other head and neck cancers are the sixth most prevalent type of cancer in the world and one of the leading causes of death in developing countries². Use of tobacco, either in smoked or smokeless form is very common in India, like in other developing countries in Asia. 15% of the global tobacco users are Indians³. India is the oral cancer capital of the world because of rampant habit of tobacco chewing. The Health Ministry's own statistics show that over 65 per cent of cancers in India can be attributed to tobacco use⁴. Oral Cancer in India is seen in both, men and women. This is a common disease in both the genders as now both, men as well as women are induced to tobacco addiction⁵. Chewing of gutkha and pan masala is not only prevalent in females belonging to labour class but has now become a trend in social gatherings, where both males and females don't hesitate in consuming pan masala and gutkha, as per the findings of a survey conducted by an NGO. It has been indicated that majority of housewives have started consuming gutkha as their husbands are also addicted to it⁶. In India, Uttar Pradesh is the state affected maximally with Oral cancer. The number of deaths in UP due to Oral cancer is 82,121 estimated till 2014⁷. In Uttar Pradesh, maximum cases of Oral cancer have been reported in Kanpur. Number of cases of people suffering from 'oral cancer' is rising in the city with more than 30% of the patients visiting JK Cancer Institute of Lala Lajpat Rai Hospital, were found suffering from the deadly disease⁸. An army recruitment drive in Kanpur last month revealed a shocking

statistic of a third of the candidates failing the medical tests for visible signs of oral cancer, caused largely by 'gutkha' addiction⁹. Over the years Kanpur has become a city of pan masala and 'gutkha' eaters. They prefer to visit a cancer specialty instead of a counsellor for quitting smoking and chewing of pan masala and 'gutkha'¹⁰. The reasons behind the widespread of Oral Cancer are many such as poverty, lack of hygienic conditions, medical awareness, education, surrounding environment etc.¹¹. Despite certain policy efforts, the prevalence of tobacco consumption has not decreased over time. Effective measures and proper advocacy need to be undertaken urgently to control the tobacco menace in India¹². The review article deals with the detailed survey of Oral cancer spread in Kanpur zone irrespective of the causative factor behind it.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study design

The data was retrieved from a cross-sectional study, conducted as community-based outreach health camps organized among an unscreened mixed population of urban and the rural areas of Kanpur city of Uttar Pradesh (UP) state in Northern India from June to August 2017 at 10 different places. The participants were individuals (male and female) of all age groups who voluntarily came to the health camp for their screening on the day of the survey. The study participants were screened by trained health workers who were sensitized and trained in primary cancer screening under the supervision of qualified medical graduates. The outreach team collected information using a pretested questionnaire on demographics: age and sex; addiction habits: tobacco use (smoked or smokeless), alcohol and betel nut; symptoms: mouth ulcers, difficulty in opening the mouth, voice hoarseness, neck swellings, difficulty in swallowing, earache/ear discharge or nasal bleeding in the unscreened population. The average of the findings collected from different places are discussed and analyzed thoroughly.

Study is carried out as per International conference of Harmonization-Good Clinical Practices Guidelines (ICH-GCP) or as per Declaration of Helsinki guidelines.

Data analysis

Since tobacco is consumed in multiple forms, which is more or less harmful in similar ways. Tobacco is used in the form of gutkha, bidi, cigarette or any other form. The results have been summarized as shown in figure 1.

In figure 1, the data reveals that tobacco is consumed in many forms. But gutkha serves to be the major form used by the people. After which Cigarette consumption stands for the second most important form of its consumption. Bidi accounts for the third most consumed form of tobacco and the remaining percentage is constituted by the other forms. This habit of gutkha consumption is being practiced as how many years is also an issue of major concern. The various figures regarding this have been shown in the figure 2.

The maximum percentage covered in the form of years of gutkha consumption is almost same as both in the group of people consuming it from last 15-20 years or from the last 20 years. After that the practice is on third position among the group of people having them from last 5-10 years. While those who have started consuming it from last five years constitute the least percentage as presented in the figure 2

The factors which are the root cause behind these habits play an important role, while studying the recent trends in the habits of tobacco consumption. The important ones are summarized in figure 3.

The figure 3 reveals that stress is the major reason behind it. People use it as a stress buster as it will help it to attain the state of euphoria. The second most important reason behind this habit is the effect of elders. There is a dominant habit present in our society of copying what the elders do, irrespective of whether it is right or not. After that the smoking scenes in movies also provoke the people, especially the youth. The maximum

percentage is made up by the combined other factors which are random, like the atmosphere of working place, financial crisis or some other reason.

Apart from this, the type of occupation also accounts for the percentage consumption of tobacco. This is illustrated in Table 1.

Apart from this, the type of occupation also accounts for the percentage consumption of tobacco. Maximum percentage has been covered by the manual labours such as those involved in factories sites, construction sites etc. After which the second position is held by the unemployed staff. Farming profession is the third one in the percentage consumption. Office job accounts for the fourth position. Fifth position is occupied by the self-employed people while the least percentage is occupied by the professionals.

The age group of the people also matters the percentage of the population, prone to the habit of using gutkha in either form. The results have been collected and displayed as projected in figure 4. The data obtained above signifies the percentage of tobacco consumed by different age groups of people. From the plotted graph, it is observed that maximum consumption of gutkha is done by the patients of age group 36-45, when analyzing male patients. This probably is the age group, when a person is more or less settled, there may be feeling of dilemma, anxiety, confusion regarding something or some other reason, may be personal or professional, while when looking for the same in female patients, the maximum consumption is done by the population lying in the age group of 46-55. Initially the females of rural areas, belonging to the class of manual labors were maximal in this category. But because of the recent trends, this habit is being observed in the high class society, may be due to the changing scenario of working atmosphere, stress due to either cause are the reasons behind. While studying the age groups with minimum consumption, in the males, is the age group 76-85, as this is the age when a person is already occupied with other ailments, therefore there is a limited intake of tobacco, while in the females the minimum patients belongs to the age group of 25-35. This is basically the age group of beginners in job and representing the youth.

Table 1: Consumption of tobacco on the basis of occupation

S.No	Occupation	Number of cases	Percentage
1.	Unemployed	67	14
2.	Self employed	15	3.1
3.	Farming	22	4.6
4.	Manual Labors	351	73.2
5.	Office job	19	4.0
6.	Professionals	5	1.1

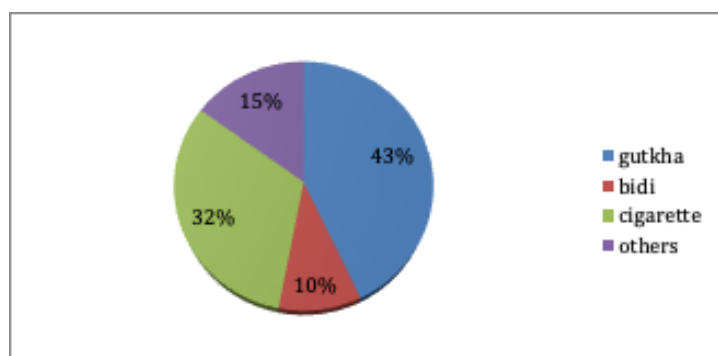


Figure 1: Different forms of tobacco consumption

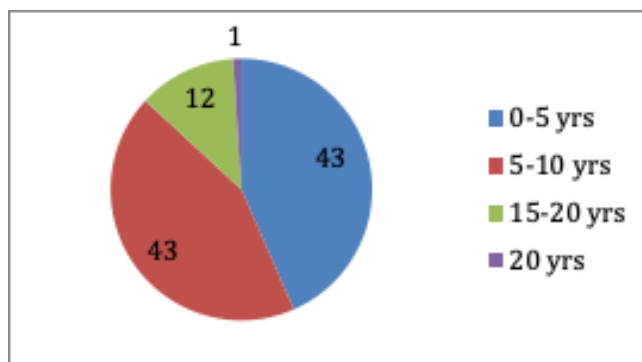


Figure 2

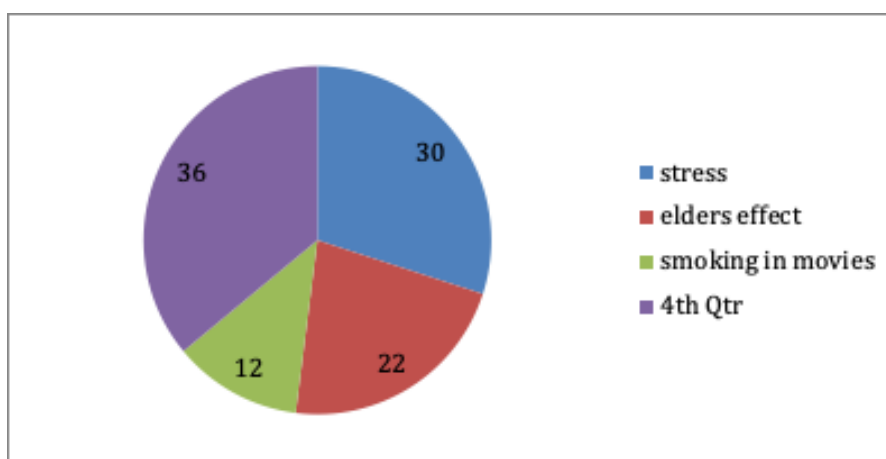


Figure 3: Root cause factors of Tobacco consumption

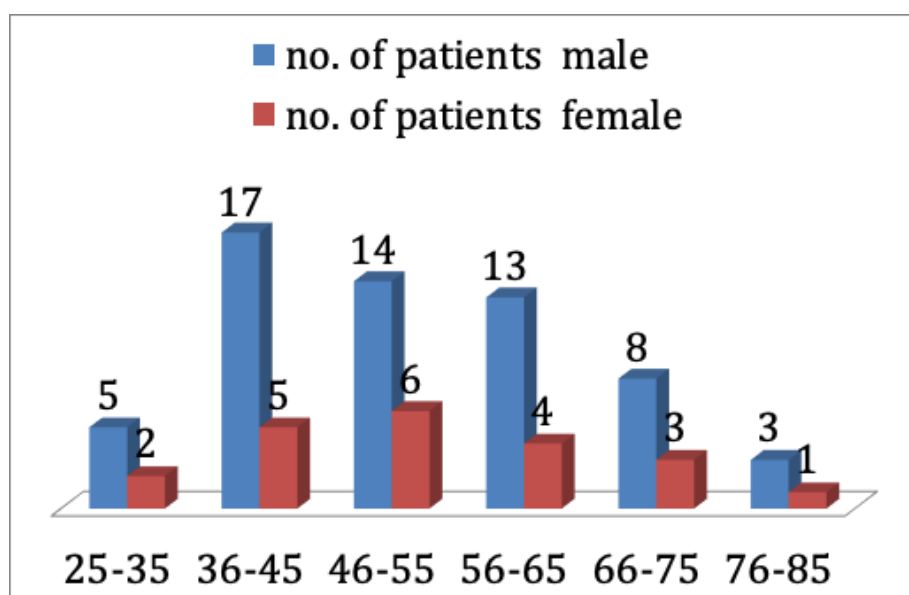


Figure 4: Age wise distribution of Gutkha consumption

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results summarized in the above graphs and diagrams reveal the approximate percentages affected studied in various cases. Gutkha is the major form in which tobacco is being consumed. There is a need to make people aware of the negative effects of it on the health. There is a need to create some alternates that will help to eradicate this habit partially or fully. There are majority of people who have been practicing this habit from the last 15-20

years or from last 20 years. They should be convinced by taking the help of awareness programs and other preventive campaigns. People should be inspired to relax and remove their stress through yoga and other physical activities. They should be encouraged about the benefits of balanced diet and a healthy life style. There should be check over the activities of tobacco consumption at public places. They should also be banned from work places, other organizations, construction sites etc. Youths should be motivated to rise against this addiction, they should be

encouraged a large proportion of people, who are prone to this habit are unemployed.

CONCLUSION

Government is taking many steps such as imposing ban on smoking in public places, uses of caption with statutory warnings in movies, ban on gutkhas in many states. The need of present time is to come forward and work together to generate awareness among people in order to remove the causative factors for complete eradication of this habit. The main area of concern to be look after is education. More educated the people are more they will be familiar with the ill effects caused by this habit. Apart from health, it also affects family life, financial conditions and ultimately affects the whole society. People should be encouraged to adopt healthy life style and opt for balanced diet. They should be inspired for practicing yoga and other meditations in order to lead a stress free life. Herbal alternates should be there so that they may help to quit or minimize this habit on partial or fuller extent.

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