



TOBACCO USE AND TRAINING FOR PATIENT COUNSELING AMONG HEALTH PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS: ARMENIA, 2006

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Abstract

Tobacco use is one of the main preventable causes of chronic disease and death in developed countries and is the second leading cause of death worldwide. Findings from the 2006 Global Health Professionals Survey (GHPS) in Armenia show that smoking prevalence rates among third-year health professional students in Armenia is high, ranging from 28.6% (dental students) to 7.2% (nursing students). GHPS data show that less than 20% of health professional students received formal training in patient cessation counseling, even though more than 90% of the same students want such training to be included in their formal curricula. Findings from the GHPS suggest the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education in Armenia must work together with other interested partners in developing, testing, and implementing successful patient cessation-counseling training programs for health professional students.

Introduction

Tobacco use is one of the main preventable causes of chronic disease and death in developed countries and is the second leading cause of death worldwide [Peto R. *et al.*, 1994; Ezzati M. *et al.*, 2002; WHO IARC 2004 a; b]. The global burden of disease estimates a doubling in the number of deaths from tobacco use, from 5 million in 2005, to over 10 million in 2020 [Peto R. *et al.*, 1994]. Health professionals can have a critical role in reducing tobacco use; even brief and simple advice from health professionals can substantially increase smoking cessation rates [US Dept. Health & Human Services, 2000 a; Fiore M.C. *et al.* 2000b; Lancaster T., *et al.*, 2000c]. Therefore, one of the strategies to reduce the number of smoking related deaths is to encourage the involvement of health professionals in tobacco use prevention and cessation counseling. There have been a few studies that collected information from health professional students in various countries about their tobacco use and training as cessation counselors [Gupta P.C.,

Ray C.S., 2003; Naskar N.N., Bhattacharya S.K., 1999; Mammas I.N. *et al.*, 2003; Vakefliu Y. *et al.* 2002]; however, these studies did not use a consistent survey methodology or questionnaire. To address this problem, the World Health Organization, US Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Canadian Public Health Association developed and implemented the Global Health Professionals Survey (GHPS) to collect data on tobacco use and cessation counseling among health professional students in WHO Member States [GTSS Collaborative Group, 2005].

This report summarizes data from GHPS conducted in Armenia in 2006 among third-year students attending dental, medical, nursing, and pharmacy schools.

Methods

The Global Health Professionals Survey (GHPS) is the part of the Global Tobacco Surveillance System (GTSS), which collects data through three surveys: the Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS), the Global School Personnel Survey (GSPS), and GHPS. GHPS is a school-based survey of third-year students pursuing advanced degrees in dentistry, medicine, pharmacy, and nursing. GHPS uses a core ques-

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