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## Say No to Tobacco: A World No Tobacco Day Special

*This Special Series celebrates the efforts made by global health community in controlling and discouraging the use of tobacco. It discusses at length about the harmful effects of tobacco on human health, brief history of No Tobacco Day and the journey so far, highlights of World No Tobacco Day 2016 and the way forward in terms of tobacco control.*

### What is Tobacco?

Tobacco is an agricultural crop, most commonly used to make cigarettes. It is grown all over the world and supports a billion-dollar industry. The main psychoactive ingredient is nicotine, and more than 4,000 other chemicals (2,000 of which are known to be poisonous) are present in cigarettes. Tobacco is a nervous system stimulant that triggers complex biochemical and neurotransmitter disruptions. It elevates heart rate and blood pressure, constricts blood vessels, irritates lung tissue, and diminishes your ability to taste and smell.

According to the American Lung Association, cigarettes contain around 600 ingredients that give off more than 7,000 different chemicals when they're lit. Many of these chemicals are poisonous, and nearly 60 of them are known carcinogens. Some of the poisons found in a cigarette are: embalming fluid, nail polish remover, butane, insecticide, battery acid, rocket fuel, exhaust fumes.

Tobacco and tobacco smoke have about 4,000 chemicals, 200 of these are poisonous and 60 of these chemicals are known to cause cancer (carcinogens). Some of these chemicals are, benzene (a petroleum product), ammonia (used in dry cleaning and toilet cleaning), formaldehyde (a chemical used to preserve dead bodies and) and Tar. Tobacco smoke causes atherosclerosis (hardening of the blood vessels) leading to heart attack and stroke. It also contains carbon mono oxide which decreases oxygen in the blood.

## What is No Tobacco Day?

World No Tobacco Day (WNTD) is observed around the world every year on May 31. It is intended to encourage a 24-hour period of abstinence from all forms of tobacco consumption around the globe. The day is further intended to draw attention to the widespread prevalence of tobacco use and to negative health effects, which currently lead to nearly 6 million deaths each year worldwide, including 600,000 of which are the results of non-smokers being exposed to second-hand smoke. The member states of the World Health Organization (WHO) created World No Tobacco Day in 1987. In the past twenty years, the day has been met with both enthusiasm and resistance around the globe from governments, public health organizations, smokers, growers, and the tobacco industry. WNTD is one of eight official global public health campaigns marked by the WHO, along with World Health Day, World Blood Donor Day, World Immunization Week, World Tuberculosis Day, World Malaria Day, World Hepatitis Day, and World AIDS Day.

## Brief History of No Tobacco Day

In 1987, the WHO's World Health Assembly had passed a resolution calling for April 7, 1988 to be "a world no-smoking day". The objective of the day was to urge tobacco users worldwide to abstain from using tobacco products for 24 hours, an action they hoped would provide assistance for those trying to quit. And in 1988, another resolution was passed by the World Health Assembly, calling for the celebration of World No Tobacco Day, every year on May 31. Since then, the WHO has supported World No Tobacco Day every year, linking each year to a different tobacco-related theme.

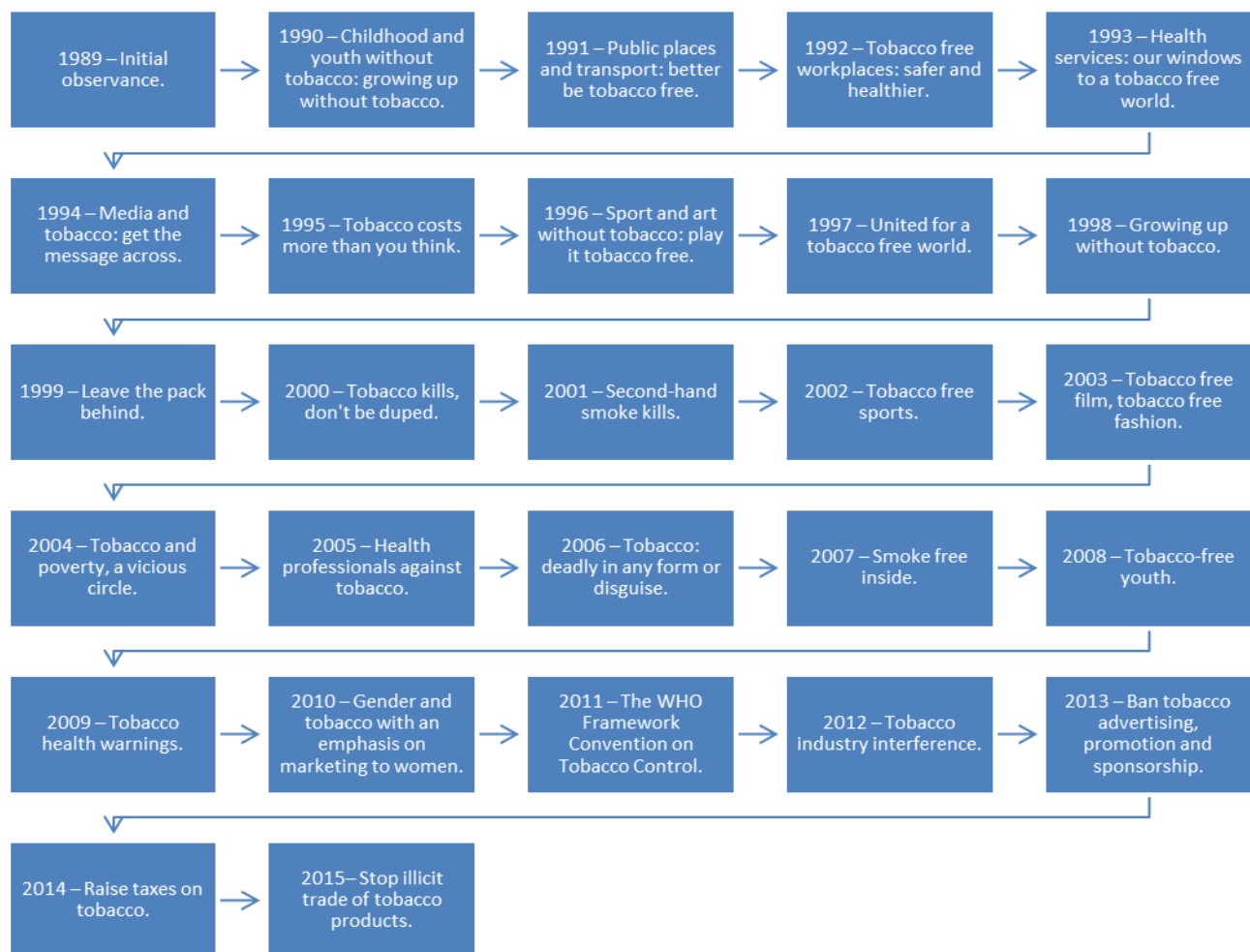
In 1998, the WHO established the Tobacco Free Initiative (TFI), an attempt to focus international resources and attention on the global health issue of tobacco. The initiative provides assistance for creating global public health policy, encourages mobilization between societies, and supports the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). The WHO FCTC is a global public health treaty adopted in 2003 by countries around the globe as an agreement to implement policies that work towards tobacco cessation.

In 2008, on the eve of the World No Tobacco Day, the WHO called for a worldwide ban on all tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship. The theme of that year's day was "Tobacco-free youth"; therefore, this initiative was especially meant to target advertising efforts aimed at youth. According to the WHO, the tobacco industry must replace older quitting or dying smokers with younger consumers. Because of this, marketing strategies are commonly observed in places that will attract youth such as movies, the Internet, billboards, and magazines. Studies have shown that the more youth are exposed to tobacco advertising, the more likely they are to smoke. Discouraging the youth was the main aim of No Tobacco Day in 2008.

In 2015, No Tobacco Day highlighted the health risks associated with tobacco use and advocated effective policies to reduce tobacco consumption, including ending the illicit trade of tobacco products.

## Past Themes

The previous themes of World No Tobacco Day have been illustrated in the timeline below:



## Why No Tobacco Day?

Smoking is a worldwide hazard. It is a single most important cause of preventable premature death. According to WHO figures there are about 1.3 billion smokers in the world. 20 billion cigarettes are sold every day. Smoking is declining in US and many other western countries. In USA smoking rate have decreased to almost half over the last three decades but it is on the rise in developing countries like Pakistan, India, Philippines, Thailand and Cambodia. In some developed countries in Far East like Japan and China more than 60% of male population smokes. One third of the world population smokes, 12% of them are women and every day 100,000 kids are added to this number. Every year 5.6 million

people die of tobacco/smoking related diseases. Every 6 second a current or former smoker dies. 70 % of smokers die younger than normal population. Smokers die 15 year younger than non-smokers. In 21st century, 1.3 billion people will die of smoking.

The tobacco epidemic is one of the biggest public health threats the world has ever faced, killing around 6 million people a year. More than 5 million of those deaths are the result of direct tobacco use while more than 600 000 are the result of non-smokers being exposed to second-hand smoke. Nearly 80% of the more than 1 billion smokers worldwide live in low- and middle-income countries, where the burden of tobacco-related illness and death is heaviest.

Tobacco users who die prematurely deprive their families of income, raise the cost of health care and hinder economic development. In some countries, children from poor households are frequently employed in tobacco farming to provide family income. These children are especially vulnerable to "green tobacco sickness", which is caused by the nicotine that is absorbed through the skin from the handling of wet tobacco leaves.

Smoking cigarette, pipe, cigar, *hukka*, *shisha* and other use of tobacco like chewing tobacco and tobacco sniffing all are dangerous and addictive. Nicotine present in tobacco smoke causes addiction by increasing the brain levels of chemicals like Dopamine and Endorphin. These chemicals give a sense of happiness hence there is craving for tobacco products. If a person tries to quit, withdrawal effects include irritability, anxiety, depression and lack of concentration.

Tobacco no matter which ever form it is, like cigarettes (even light or filtered), cigars, chewable tobacco, *hukka*. are all a silent killer. It does not kill anyone directly but the approximately 4000 toxic chemicals including nicotine as well as the direct irritant effect of the inhaled smoke cause various illnesses. Cancers, cardiopulmonary and pregnancy related complications being the few notable ones. Smokers are said to have a death rate twice of non-smokers. More a person smokes; greater is the risk for smoking-related diseases. While it is proven by research that smoking cessation reduces risk of such diseases as well as pre-mature death especially if one quits early. It is an everyday observation that a smoker lives a life of many compromises, night time awakenings due to bouts of intractable cough with phlegm production, lack of stamina to participate in everyday activities especially early breathlessness, to name a few.

Lung cancer is one of the leading cancers in males and females. 90% of lung cancer in males and almost 80% in females are associated with smoking. In addition to lungs, tobacco also causes cancer of the mouth, throat, esophagus, stomach, pancreas, bladder and kidneys. Almost 20% of heart related diseases are linked with smoking. It is an independent risk factor for coronary heart disease. Risk of 'heart attack' increases six fold in females and three fold in males who smoke as compared to non-smokers. Diseases like chronic lung problems, stroke and reproductive ability of both the genders are also adversely affected. Wrinkling of skin and peptic ulcers are also common, while the Carbon Monoxide inhaled in cigarette smoke impairs the ability of hemoglobin to carry oxygen.

## How World No Tobacco Day is celebrated?

World No Tobacco Day celebration is organized on annual basis by the WHO and its member states including non-governmental and governmental organizations for the people to get aware of all the health issues caused by the tobacco use. Some of the activities which are organized for celebrating the day are public marches, demonstrations programs, big banners, advertising campaigns through educational programs, direct oral communication with common public to encourage and promote them to stop smoking, organize meetings for involved campaigners, marches, public debates, anti-tobacco activities, public art, health camps, rallies and parades, implementing new laws to restrict the smoking in particular areas and so many effective activities. It has not been declared as a public holiday or official holiday however, it is celebrated with lots of effective campaigns.

Common people including non-governmental and governmental organizations become actively involved in the celebration of World No Tobacco Day to draw other people attention to get aware of health problems of tobacco use. People use different types of the symbols to attract people's mind towards the celebration to actively take part in. Some of the symbols are clean ashtrays with flowers, symbolizing major body organs (like heart, lungs, kidney and etc) damage from tobacco use, demonstrating no smoking signs, symbolizing death of brain due to smoking, posters display directly or indirectly using internet sites, blogs and other means.

WHO is a main organization which acts as a central committee for organizing World No Tobacco Day all around the world. Award ceremonies are also organized since 1988 by the WHO to encourage organizations or individuals who actively and amazingly contributed to the event in reducing the tobacco consumption. During this award ceremony special awards and recognition certificates are distributed to the organizations and individuals of any region or country.

## Tobacco effects in the South East Asia Region (SEAR)

Tobacco use causes nearly 6 million deaths each year, with 80% of those deaths in low- and middle-income countries. All countries in the WHO South-East Asia Region are low- or middle-income with limited resources and a heavy tobacco toll. 250 million people in this region smoke and a similar number use smokeless tobacco, and most people are unaware regarding how harmful these products are. In fact, some people believe smokeless tobacco is good for oral health.

Roughly half of adult males and one-tenth of adult females use tobacco. Around 10% of youth 13-15 years old are tobacco users. Tobacco kills 1.3 million people in SEAR every year. Unfortunately, tobacco use, second-hand smoke and tobacco advertising remain at high levels.

## HERD in Tobacco Control

**Randomized Control Trial on TB – Tobacco Intervention:** A three-year multi-country randomised control trial (RCT) study has been recently started in few districts to test the integration of inexpensive tobacco cessation strategies of proven efficacy into TB control programmes. The RCT has two arms: (a) behavioural support including placebo; and (b) behavioural support including cytosine with nicotine replacement drug to be tested. This study is implemented in Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh.



**A Behaviour Change Intervention for Tobacco Cessation in Nepal:** This feasibility study was carried out in 2013 and 2014 in collaboration with Ministry of Health (through National Health Education, Information and Communication Centre and National Tuberculosis Centre) and COMDIS-HSD, a research programme consortium based at University of Leeds, UK. This study was implemented in 2 districts of Nepal: Kathmandu and Rupandehi. Within these districts, all the patients in the selected primary health care centres with respiratory problems (including TB) who smoked were given behaviour change counselling to help them quit smoking and to improve their health.



*IEC materials developed to aid the counselling sessions*

The intervention included a counselling session run by outpatient department (OPD) staff to patients who smoke. Staff employed behaviour change techniques, addressing factors such as maintaining willpower and motivation to give up smoking. They also used information, education and communication (IEC) materials such as flipbooks and leaflets (pictured above) to help convey important lifestyle messages.

#### Findings from the Study:

- It is feasible to implement a smoking cessation intervention in primary health care centres, particularly if the intervention is targeted at those patients who are motivated to quit.
- 37% of smokers who received the intervention were able to quit smoking following the intervention.
- Use of various IEC materials makes the behaviour support intervention more effective. For staff, the flipbook makes the counselling session with patients more structured and effective; the leaflet, as well as providing information, also serves as a good reminder for patients.
- Integrating smoking cessation within routine primary health care helps deliver the intervention effectively. It also increases the likelihood of helping people to stop smoking.

HERD was also felicitated with World No Tobacco Day Award 2015 by WHO Nepal on June 5 at WHO office, Nepal.



Dr Sushil Baral, HERD's Executive Chairperson receiving the award on behalf of HERD

## World No Tobacco 2016

For this year's World No Tobacco Day, WHO and the Secretariat of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control are calling on countries to get ready for plain (standardized) packaging of tobacco products. Plain packaging refers to “measures to restrict or prohibit the use of logos, colors, brand images or promotional information on packaging other than brand names and product names displayed in a standard color and font style (plain packaging).

Tobacco packaging is a tool that helps in promoting consumption of tobacco products. Tobacco packaging makes products more attractive, advertises and promotes tobacco consumption, distracts from health warnings and deceives people into thinking that some products are less harmful than others.

Plain packaging (also called standardized packaging) refers to “measures to restrict or prohibit the use of logos, colors, brand images or promotional information on packaging other than brand names and product names displayed in a standard color and font style. Plain packaging has also been described as packaging that is “black and white or two other contrasting colors, as prescribed by national authorities; nothing other than a brand name, a product name and/or manufacturer's name, contact details and the quantity of product in the packaging, without any logos or other features apart from health warnings, tax stamps and other government-mandated information or markings; prescribed font style and size; and standardized shape, size and materials. There should be no advertising or promotion inside or attached to the package or on individual cigarettes or other tobacco products.

## **Why encourage plain packaging?**

Plain packaging helps in:

- Reducing the attractiveness of tobacco products.
- Eliminating the effects of tobacco packaging as a form of advertising and promotion.
- Addressing package design techniques that may suggest that some products are less harmful than others.
- Increasing the noticeability and effectiveness of health warnings.

## **Goals of WNTD 2016 campaign**

World No Tobacco Day 2016 aims to:

1. Highlight the role of plain packaging as part of a comprehensive, multisectoral approach to tobacco control.
2. Facilitate policy development by Member States and the globalization of plain packaging by providing informative, compelling and persuasive information.
3. Encourage Member States to strengthen packaging and labelling measures and restrictions on advertising, promotion and sponsorship as they work towards plain packaging in a step-wise approach.
4. Support Member States and civil society against tobacco industry interference in political processes leading to adoption of plain packaging laws.

## **What needs to be done for tobacco control?**

1. Policy makers should consider adopting legislation or regulations to implement plain packaging of tobacco products as part of comprehensive, multispectral approaches to tobacco control.
2. This process should include establishing a formal plan and timeline for implementation of plain packaging, in line with each Member State's tobacco control program and priorities.
3. In some cases, to prepare for plain packaging, policy makers may: – strengthen health warnings; – strengthen bans on misleading packaging and labelling; – ensure that bans on advertising, promotion and sponsorship are comprehensive; and – ensure that each of these measures is well enforced.
4. Policy makers should resist interference in the policy process by the tobacco industry in line with Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC and its guidelines for implementation.



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