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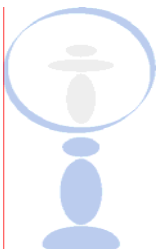
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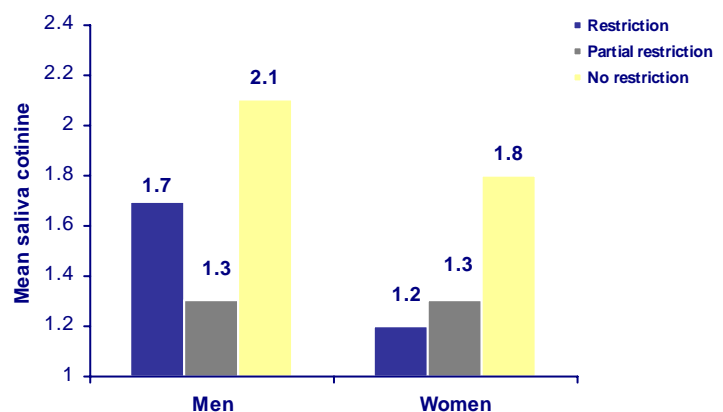
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**What's New:**

- Tobacco Free Initiative (TFI) announces the release of a WHO Study Group Scientific Advisory Note addressing health effects, research needs, and recommended action by regulators of waterpipes.
- Arabic translation of the SCTS web site is now available on <http://www.scts-sy.org/ar/home.php>.
- Researchers from SCTS visited the School of Population and Health Sciences, University of Newcastle, UK to discuss the collaboration on possible joint research projects related to women's health in Aleppo.
- SCTS's researchers attended the Global Dialogue for Effective Stop Smoking Campaigns conference in Toronto, Canada, November 2-4, 2005.



Graph shows that households which applied restrictions to smoking indoors could achieve partial protection from exposure to tobacco smoke based on saliva cotinine levels (Aleppo Household Survey, SCTS, Maziak et al, Preventive Medicine 2006).



## Published Studies/Reports:

### Research Assistance Matching (RAM) project

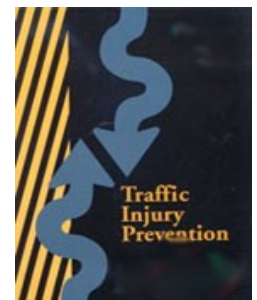
**R**esearch Assistance Matching (RAM) is an innovative online programme to facilitate tobacco control research collaboration by connecting researchers and providing them with a platform to share and exchange experience. The purpose of the project is to enhance the spread and quality of tobacco control research in developing countries to increase their access to the expertise and experience of the international tobacco control research community and assisting international colleagues to identify potential partners in developing countries. RAM is currently supported by Syrian Center for Tobacco Studies, the Institute for Global Tobacco Control of the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, and Globalink.

Maziak W and Wipfli.H Tobacco Control 2005; 14(3): 151.  
<http://tc.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/14/3/151>



### Injuries in Aleppo, Syria; first population-based estimates and characterization of predominant types.

**D**espite the growing burden of injuries worldwide, Syria and many other Arab countries still lack population-based estimates of different types of injuries. This study aims to provide first population-based estimates of major injuries in Syria and characterize groups at increased risk. Methods: An interviewer-administered population-based survey of adults 18-65 years residing in Aleppo, Syria was conducted in 2004. The study sample involved 2038 household representatives in Aleppo (45.2% men, mean age 35.3+12.1, response rate 86%). We inquired about participants self-reported injuries in the past year that required medical attention as well as injuries among their household members. When reported, injuries were further assessed according to type, place, and outcome. Results: Overall, there was 153 self-reported injuries in the past year (77.3 per 1000 adult respondents, 93.1 per 1000 in men and 64.4 per 1000 in women,  $p=0.02$ ). Other than gender, injuries differed by age (the older age group being least affected), and place of occurrence, as men were more likely to sustain traffic injuries and be injured outside the home. Injuries were reported among 236 household members (21.0 per 1000), and were slightly more frequent in children than adults (22.0 per 1000 for children, and 19.7 per 1000 for adults,  $p=0.2$ ). Traffic injuries, falls, and poisoning (food) were by far the most common types of injury experienced by participants as well as their household members. Falls and traffic injuries seem to have caused most morbidity for the injured, while burns, although not frequently reported, were associated with an unfavorable outcome in the majority of cases. Conclusions: This information provides baseline information about the burden of different injuries in Syria, and the sociodemographic factors related to them.



Maziak W, Ward KD, Rastam S. Injuries in Aleppo, Syria; first population-based estimates and characterization of predominant types. BMC Public Health 2006 Mar 13; 6(1):63.  
<http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/6/63>

## Measuring exposure to environmental tobacco smoke (ETS): A developing country's perspective

**A**ims. To assess exposure to ETS among nonsmokers in the community and examine the relation between various subjective and objective measures of exposure to ETS in a developing country's setting.

Methods: An interviewer-administered population-based survey of adults 18-65 years residing in Aleppo, Syria. From a total number of 2038 participants, a sub-sample of 419 nonsmokers (27.2% men, 72.9% women, mean age 34 years) underwent subjective and objective assessment of exposure to ETS (saliva cotinine, breath CO, self-reported measures of exposures combined into ETS exposure scale).

Results: Overall, 97.6% of adults nonsmokers assessed in this study, 72.9% of whom were women, have detectable saliva cotinine levels (mean±SD 1.7±1.5 ng/ml). Correlation between self-reported exposure measures and saliva cotinine was moderate with the strongest observed for number of cigarette smokers in the house, average number of cigarettes smoked daily in the house, house policy regarding smoking, and total ETS score (r 0.3-0.4). these same variables were among the best predictors of saliva cotinine according to stepwise linear regression analysis, but their individual relevance differed between men and women reflecting underlying differences in gender-based behavior-mobility patterns.

Generally, subjective measures could explain 22% of the variability in cotinine levels in men and 19% in women.

Conclusions: Exposure to ETS is universal among adults nonsmokers in Syria. Saliva cotinine correlated moderately with self-reported measures, whereby selected subjective measures can be as informative as composite scores incorporating multiple measures. Even in this environment of omnipresence of smoking, household restrictions seem to offer protection against ETS exposure. (Graph page 1)

Maziak W, Ward KD, Eissenberg.T. Measuring exposure to environmental tobacco smoke (ETS): A developing country's perspective. *Prev Med* 2006; (in press).



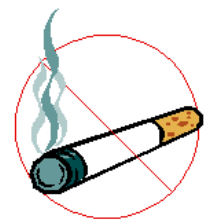
## Lebanon: young stars turned to smoke

**A**rab Star Academy is a popular Arabic adaptation of a French TV reality show that has been broadcast on the Lebanese Broadcasting Cooperation (LBC) and on its satellite, since 2003. The show has found tremendous popularity among young viewers. In one of the programme's advertising breaks, a Davidoff cigarette ad is shown. The advertisement format and content is not particularly associated with youth, rather it is a typical brand ad like those shown in cinemas. The health warning is in minute script, and ends with Davidoff's catchphrase, "The more you know"

This is not the first time that Davidoff has broken ethical boundaries; previous examples have included activities connected with a "Friendship Tour" in which young people are taken around Lebanon. The Arab Star Academy is just the latest in a series of overt tobacco advertisements aimed at young Arabs everywhere.

It is an issue not only of promotion to young people, but also of cross border advertising. LBC extends its programmes throughout the world reaching millions of Arabic speaking viewers in the Middle East, Europe, Africa, America, South America, and Australia.

Tobacco advertising through satellite TV stations poses a major threat for countries that are trying to impose restrictions. Such ads can smartly achieve several valued goals of the "new" tobacco industry. This case study confirms the importance of the two issues of marketing to youth and cross-border advertising. Health advocates must lobby their governments to ensure it is stopped, by national action, regional cooperation, and through the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.



Maziak W, Nakkash R, and Soweid RA. Lebanon: young stars turned to smoke. *Tobacco Control* 2006;15:80-81. <http://tc.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/15/2/80>

## The tobacco epidemic in Syria

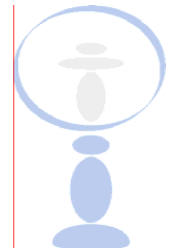
**T**he Syrian Center for Tobacco Studies (SCTS) was established in response to the smoking epidemic in Syria and lack of local knowledge and expertise to confront it.

**Objectives:** To (1) study tobacco use and local smoking practices using both qualitative and quantitative research methods; (2) develop and test an effective smoking cessation intervention for the Syrian environment; and (3) train Syrian researchers.

**Methods and results:** The Aleppo Household Survey involved a representative sample of adults in Aleppo (2038 subjects, 45.2% men, mean age 35.3 years, response rate 86%). The prevalence of cigarette smoking was 56.9% among men and 17.0% among women, while the prevalence of waterpipe smoking was 20.2% among men and 4.8% among women. Daily use predominated for cigarettes (29.0%), while the opposite was seen in waterpipe use with 10.6% smoking occasionally. Interest in quitting was greater for cigarette than waterpipe smokers (74.0% v 48.6%), while quit rates were higher for waterpipe compared to cigarettes (28.2% v 16.5%). In-depth ethnographic interviews with smokers show that smoking waterpipe is often viewed as an aesthetic enjoyable experience, while smoking cigarettes is viewed as a mundane anxiety-relieving addiction. Clinical laboratory studies reveal that both waterpipe and cigarette smokers in Syria are exposed to smoke toxicants and exhibit dependence symptoms.

**Conclusions:** All these data have been used iteratively to adapt smoking cessation interventions from developed countries to suit the local Syrian environment. Research conducted in the SCTS to date has provided a fertile training ground for Syrian researchers, as well as for the building of regional collaboration.

K D Ward, T Eissenberg, S Rastam, T Asfar, F Mzayek, M F Fouad, F Hammal, J Mock, W Maziak. The tobacco epidemic in Syria. *Tobacco Control* 2006;(in press).



## On the gains of seeding tobacco research in developing countries

**A**n evidence-guided approach to tobacco control is particularly relevant to societies where limited resources necessitate rationing expenditures to areas with the most potential impact. Without negating the universal relevance of tobacco control knowledge generated in developed countries, answers to specific local questions are best generated by credible research conducted within the target societies by people native to the local environment and culture.

The holy grail of tobacco research in developing countries lies in finding the delicate balance between required resources and potential benefits of the proposed research agendas. Projects supported by the research and capacity building initiative of the Fogarty International Center strive to achieve this balance. Countries and regions that until very recently had scarce standardised data about tobacco use, or scarce national capacity to address the tobacco problem have taken impressive steps in these directions, thanks to this single modestly funded initiative.

The gains from building local research capacity and generating local data are critical, both for knowledge translation and new knowledge generation.

Equally important for developing countries is that successful collaborations in tobacco-control research and building of skilled local capacity can sprout new research in other health areas, thus broadening the impact of such initiatives on the public health landscape in developing countries.



Maziak W, Arora M, Reddy KS, Mao Z. On the gain of seeding tobacco research in developing countries. *Tobacco Control* 2006; (in press).



