المركز السوري للأبحاث التدخين
SYRIAN CENTER FOR TOBACCO STUDIES

Syrian Society Against Cancer
-Aleppo-

In this issue:

What's New:

- **The first Syrian Center for Tobacco Studies International Summer Program for Tobacco Control Research**
  July 13-17, 2008, Aleppo, Syria

29 participants from 8 Arab countries (Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and Syria) gathered in Al-Razi Hall at the University of Aleppo to share one another's experiences and knowledge in tobacco control research.
This week-long tobacco control research-oriented course was designed to meet the needs of a wide range of health-related professionals, who need training in tobacco control research methods.
The course was research-oriented, and focused on methods of tobacco control research that are relevant to the tobacco epidemic in the Arab region
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- **Comparison the withdrawal effects of cigarette and waterpipe tobacco smoking**
  A new laboratory study is now conducted by the SCTS to compare the withdrawal suppressing effects of cigarette and waterpipe tobacco smoking in individuals who engage in both forms of smoking. This study will include 60 participants of past 6-month waterpipe use and daily cigarette smoking

The first Syrian Center for Tobacco Studies International Summer Program for Tobacco Control Research

The Syrian Center for Tobacco Studies (SCTS), in partnership with University of Aleppo, University of Memphis, American University of Beirut, and Virginia Commonwealth University, held their first International Summer Program for Tobacco Control Research in Aleppo, Syria during 13-17 July 2008. Announcement of this course was posted on the SCTS website, GLOBALink, and emails to listservs. Tuition for attending the course was free for all participants. Beside, and as a part of its objectives, SCTS offered 12 competitive fellowships to participants from Arab countries to attend this program. Fellowships included travel expenses of 500 US dollars each, accommodation and food expenses in Aleppo during the course period.

29 participants from 8 Arab countries (Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and Syria) gathered in Al-Razi Hall at the University of Aleppo to share one another's experiences and knowledge in tobacco control research. Program participants were from different backgrounds; most of them were medical doctors, others are working in research centers or tobacco control NGOs. But all of them showed high interest in tobacco control research either when sending their application or through discussions during the course.

Speakers and course faculty came from partner institutions (University of Memphis, Virginia Commonwealth University, University of Washington, and American University of Beirut), in addition to those from the Syrian Center for Tobacco Studies, in accordance to their expertise and planned themes. Speakers used different methods for presenting; Power point lectures, group discussion, and case-study presentations. English was the official language of the course with Arabic support when necessary.

The main topics of the course were designed to meet the needs of beginning researchers at various levels and roles in governmental and non-governmental sectors.

The course focused on different topics related to tobacco control; the tobacco epidemic, research methods in tobacco control, cessation interventions for tobacco users, and a day-long sessions on waterpipe, a tobacco use method that is witnessing a dramatic surge in the Middle East. An interesting and special workshop was held in the last day to learn how to write and publish research and how to apply for funding.

Beside the scientific program, social and entertainment activities were offered to participants and faculty to introduce them to the rich culture and history of Aleppo, and create friendly atmosphere for sharing experience and future partnerships. The social program included dinning in the old city quarter, and in front of the famous Aleppo Citadel. A very interesting evening involved listening to Aleppian Sufi music and watching the traditional "Mawlaweyeh" dance in one of the most beautiful historical houses in Aleppo. Visits of historical sites included a visit to the Great Citadel of Aleppo, St. Simon Church and the Museum of Ma'arat No'oman that contains very famous Byzantine mosaic dating back to 5th century.

It was an exciting week on all levels as shown by quotes from the event's participants.

"It was truly a remarkable event that exceeded my every expectation. People here are asking me "How was Syria?" and I tell them that I have never had a more productive and entertaining trip in my entire career." Tom Eissenberg- Faculty VCU-US

"In my opinion the summer program was a success in many areas: the organizational part, the scientific part, the personal networking part, and definitely the place of the workshop was superb!!!" Issam Al-Khatib- Birzeit University, Palestine

"It was definitely a great unforgettable moment. I wish it will happen again." Alaaeldin Elkoussi, University of Assiut, Assiut, Egypt

Published Studies/Reports:

The waterpipe: time for action.

The waterpipe, known in many cultures under different shapes and names (e.g. hookah, shisha, narghile), is a centuries-old tobacco use method that is witnessing a world-wide surge in popularity. This popularity is most noticeable among youths, and is surpassing cigarette smoking among this group in some societies. Many factors may have contributed to the recent waterpipe spread, including the introduction of sweetened/flavored waterpipe tobacco (known as Maassel), its reduced-harm perception, the thriving café culture, mass media and the internet. The passage of smoke through water on its way to the smoker underlies much of the common misperception that waterpipe use is less harmful than cigarettes. The health/addictive profile of waterpipe compared to cigarettes is largely unresearched and is likely to be influenced by the properties of smoke, duration and frequency of use, type of tobacco used, volume of smoke inhaled and the contribution of charcoal. However, the accumulation of evidence about the harmful and addictive potential of waterpipe use is outpacing the public health response to this health risk. A timely public health and policy action is needed in order to curb the emerging waterpipe smoking epidemic.

Maziak W. Addiction. 2008 Sep. 4

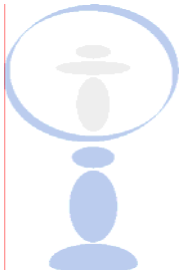
Comorbidity of depression with chronic diseases: a population-based study in Aleppo, Syria.

The aim of this study is to assess the comorbidity and correlates of depression in chronic diseases in the community in Aleppo, Syria. This has never been previously investigated in an Arab country. METHOD: We conducted a cross-sectional, population-based study in Aleppo on adults aged 18-65 (N = 2038). We collected data utilizing a structured interview questionnaire. Socio-demographics, general health information, and self-report of physician-diagnosed depression and chronic diseases active in the past year were obtained. We used logistic regression to estimate the odds of depression in chronic diseases and socio-demographic correlates of depression comorbid with chronic diseases. RESULTS: Mean age (SD) was 35.3 (12.1) years, 55% were female. In women, predictors of depression were heart disease (OR = 3.95, 95% CI: 1.50-10.40), hypertension (OR = 2.92, 95% CI: 1.53-5.55), and kidney disease (OR = 2.96, 95% CI: 1.64-5.32). Depression comorbidity with any chronic disease decreased in higher socio-economic status (middle vs. low: OR = 0.28, 95% CI: 0.12-0.65; high vs. low: OR = 0.20, 95% CI: 0.05-0.81). In men, predictors of depression were rheumatism (OR = 7.10, 95% CI: 2.58-19.60) and respiratory disease (OR = 3.77, 95% CI: 1.23-11.60). Depression comorbidity decreased in residence in formal zones (OR = 0.22, 95% CI: 0.06-0.80). CONCLUSION: Depression is associated with many chronic diseases in the community in Aleppo, a finding consistent with reports from other cultures. Potential gender-related risk factors were identified. Findings inform public mental health planning and support the delivery of depression treatment in primary care settings.

Kilzieh N, Rastam S, Maziak W, Ward KD. Int J Psychiatry Med. 2008;38(2):169-84.

Tobacco Abstinence Symptoms, CO exposure, and Puff Topography in Waterpipe Tobacco Smokers

Aims: To assess tobacco abstinence symptoms, puffing behavior, and carbon monoxide (CO) exposure in waterpipe users before and after a waterpipe tobacco smoking episode**.** Design: Sixty-one waterpipe tobacco smokers (56 men, mean age ± SD 30.9 ± 9.5 years, minimum use history 3 episodes/week) abstained from smoking for at least 24 hours (verified with expired air CO levels < 7 parts/million) and then smoked tobacco from a waterpipe ad libitum in a laboratory. Before and after smoking subjective effects and expired air CO were assessed; puff topography was measured during smoking. Results: The mean waterpipe use episode duration was 33.1 ± 13.1 minutes. Urge to smoke, restlessness, craving, and other tobacco abstinence symptoms were reduced significantly after smoking, while ratings of dizzy, lightheaded and other direct effects of nicotine increased. Expired air CO increased significantly from a mean of 4.0 ± 1.7 before to 35.5 ± 32.7 after smoking. On average, participants took 169 ± 100 puffs, with a mean puff volume of 511 ± 333 ml. Conclusions: Abstinent waterpipe tobacco smokers report symptoms similar to those reported by abstinent cigarette smokers, and these symptoms are suppressed by subsequent waterpipe tobacco smoking. Expired air CO and puff topography data indicate that, relative to a single cigarette, a single waterpipe tobacco smoking episode is associated with greater smoke exposure. Taken together, these data are consistent with the notion that waterpipe tobacco smoking is likely associated with the risk of tobacco/nicotine dependence and tobacco-caused disease.



Maziak W, Rastam S, Ibrahim I, Ward KD, Shihadeh A, Eissenberg T. Nicotine & Tobacco Research *(in press)*

Secondhand smoke exposure among women and children: evidence from 31 countries.

This multicenter study was designed to describe the range of exposure to secondhand smoke (SHS) among women and children living with smokers around the world and generate locally relevant data to motivate the development of tobacco control policies and interventions in developing countries.
METHODS: In 2006, we conducted a cross-sectional exposure survey to measure air nicotine concentrations in households and hair nicotine concentrations among nonsmoking women and children in convenience samples of 40 households in 31 countries.
RESULTS: Median air nicotine concentration was 17 times higher in households with smokers (0.18 mug/m(3)) compared with households without smokers (0.01 mug/m(3)). Air nicotine and hair nicotine concentrations in women and children increased with the number of smokers in the household. The dose-response relationship was steeper among children. Air nicotine concentrations increased an estimated 12.9 times (95% confidence interval=9.4, 17.6) in households allowing smoking inside compared with those prohibiting smoking inside.
CONCLUSIONS: Our results indicate that women and children living with smokers are at increased risk of premature death and disease from exposure to SHS. Interventions to protect women and children from household SHS need to be strengthened.

Wipfli H, Avila-Tang E, Navas-Acien A, Kim S, Onicescu G, Yuan J, Breysse P, Samet JM; Famri Homes Study Investigators. Am J Public Health. 2008; 98(4):672-9.