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*The influence of environmental factors and education
on tobacco smoking among students of the Faculty of Nursing,
Medical University of Lublin*

Tobacco smoking among medical personnel is a problem concerning not only our country. The habit is widespread not only among doctors, but among medium level personnel as well. Nurses and midwives in their work have a close contact with patients, which enables them informing the patients on the influence of tobacco smoking on human health and benefits derived from giving up the habit. Positive own example is indispensable in this field as without it, it is difficult to promote healthy lifestyle without cigarettes among patients (5). Formation of proper attitudes and healthy behaviours should be one of the main goals of academic education of nurses and midwives.

The aim of the study is an attempt at analysing the problem of tobacco smoking among the students of the Faculty of Nursing of the Medical University of Lublin.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The material consisted of 152 anonymous questionnaires filled in by the students of the Faculty of Nursing of the Medical University of Lublin in the academic year 2001/2002. In the study there were examined full-time and part-time students from the division of nursing and midwifery. There was applied the method of standardized interview using an interview questionnaire. The material was analyzed by means of descriptive statistics methods.

RESULTS

Women were prevalent among the respondents (143 persons out of 152), the mean age equalled 29.4 years. The majority were students of nursing (109 persons) and 43 represented midwifery. The prevalence of tobacco smoking in the studied group is presented in Figure 1. From the total 29.6% of the students declared social descent from intelligentsia, 51.9% from the working class and 18.5% from farmers. The influence of the social descent on prevalence of tobacco smoking is presented in Figure 2. The place of residence of 28.9% of the examined group was a big city, 41.4% – a small town, and 29.7% – the countryside. Figure 3 presents tobacco smoking distribution among the closest family members of the examined students. In Figure 4 there are presented factors which had the greatest influence on taking up tobacco smoking among smoking students. Among 41 smokers, 33 persons usually smoke under 20 cigarettes daily, and 8 students smoke more. The influence of medical education on the attitude of the smoking students is not extensive – after taking up nursing studies 8 students limited the number of smoked cigarettes, 5 tried to quit smoking, while in 23 cases no change was

observed, and on the contrary – 5 persons took up smoking during their studies. The students who gave up smoking tobacco (20 persons) stated that the greatest influence on their decision (scale ranging from 0 to maximum 5 points) had the knowledge of harmful effects of the habit – 4.2 points, positive influence of the environment of studies – 2.65 points, positive influence of a partner – 1.75 and becoming a parent – 1.55. In Figure 5 there are presented situations in which it was most difficult for the smoking students to refrain from smoking a cigarette. Figure 6 presents the opinions of the non-smoking 91 examined students concerning factors from their environment having the greatest influence on their decision about non-smoking.

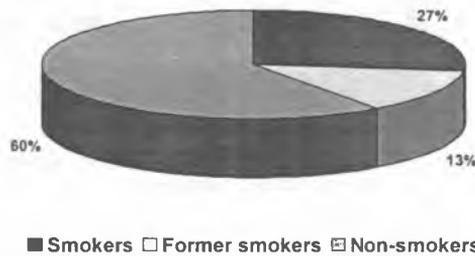


Fig. 1. The prevalence of tobacco smoking in the studied group

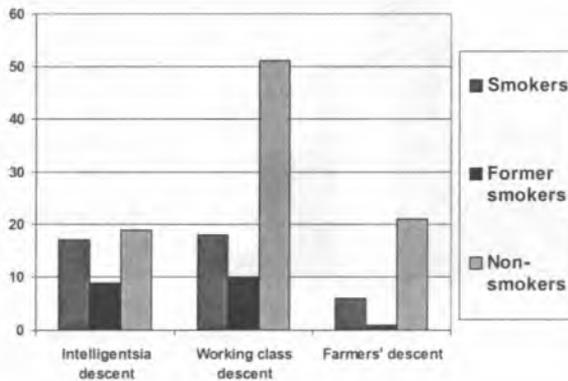


Fig. 2. The influence of the social descent on prevalence of tobacco smoking

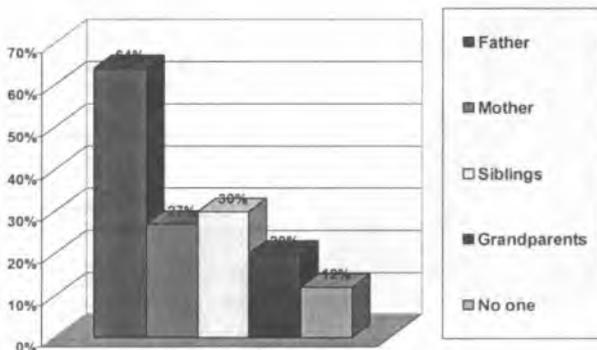


Fig. 3. Tobacco smoking distribution among the closest family members of the examined students

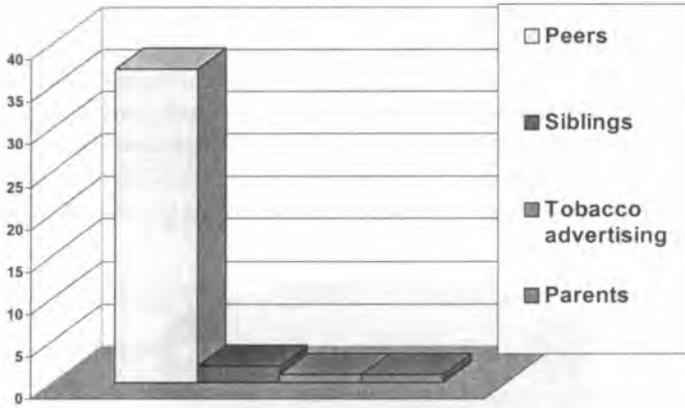


Fig. 4. Factors which had the greatest influence on taking up tobacco smoking among smoking students

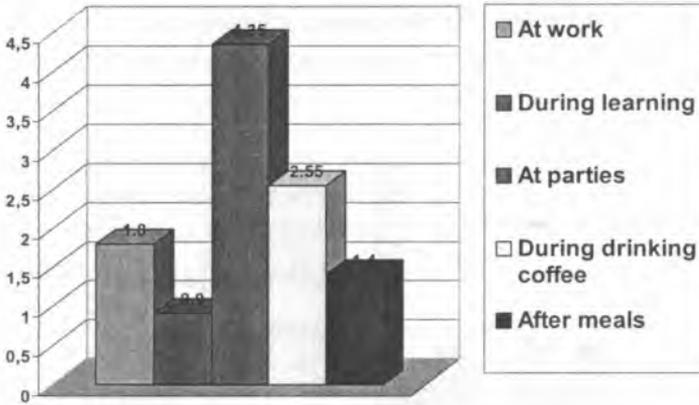


Fig. 5. Situations in which it was most difficult for them to refrain from smoking a cigarette

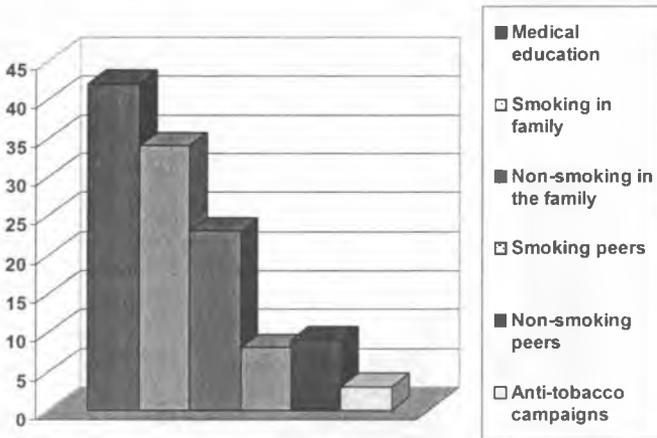


Fig. 6. The opinions of non-smoking students concerning factors from their environment having the greatest influence on their decision about non-smoking

DISCUSSION

The students of Nursery Faculties are an important group in programmes of prevention of smoking (8). Health promoting education is most effective in young people as in this period there are definitely formed fundamentals of future lifestyles, including healthy behaviours (2). It is known that attitudes of future health service workers are formed during many years, even before the beginning of the studies in the medical school. Therefore in the study there were analyzed factors influencing the decision about smoking or non-smoking among students of the Faculty of Nursing. It follows from the study that smoking peers had the strongest influence on decision about taking up tobacco smoking in the studied group.

The importance of medical education is underlined in literature (4, 6, 7). It is believed that medical education induces changes in lifestyles, shifts from negative to positive health behaviors as well as supports remaining in the sphere of positive lifestyles (3). The majority of the examined students in the own material were invariable or recent non-smokers and only over one-fourth of the studied group were active smokers. However, the percentage of smokers is not that high when compared with prevalence of tobacco smoking among Italian or British students of nursing as it reaches 43–51% of them (1, 6). Moreover, the habit of smoking is less marked in this social group in comparison with general population – it is estimated that in Poland 42% of men and 23% of women are active smokers (9).

In Denmark there were analyzed smoking habits among students of nursing and it was found that additional classes on the influence of smoking on human health did not decrease the prevalence of the habit (8). Own material proved that taking up nursing studies did not influence smoking patterns in the majority of smoking students – only 5 students tried to give up smoking, while solely 8 students limited the number of smoked cigarettes. Not only no change was observed in the smoking habits of the majority of the group of smokers, but, what is more, 5 students took up smoking during their studies. Knowledge of harmful effects of smoking habit was chosen as the most important reason of quitting smoking, while positive influence of the environment of medical school was significant as well. The influence of a partner or of the fact of becoming a parent also were of importance. It proves that promotion of healthy behaviours should be more underlined in the teaching curriculum of the nursing studies.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The studies proved that medical education and knowledge of harmfulness of tobacco smoking are the main reasons of non-smoking habits of the analyzed group of students.

2. The decision about taking up smoking is mostly influenced by smoking peers.

3. This testifies to the need of further educational actions during nursing studies that would promote proper health behaviors in this field.

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SUMMARY

Tobacco smoking among medical personnel is a problem concerning not only our country. Nurses and midwives in their work have a close contact with patients allowing influence on their health behaviours. Positive own example is indispensable in this field. Formation of proper attitudes and healthy behaviours should be one of the main goals of academic education of nurses and midwives. The aim of the study was an attempt at analysing the problem of tobacco smoking among the students of the Faculty of Nursing, Medical University of Lublin. The material consisted of 152 anonymous questionnaires filled in by the students in the academic year 2001/2002. There was applied the method of standardized interview using an interview questionnaire. The material was analysed by means of descriptive statistics methods. Women were more prevalent among the respondents (143 persons out of 152), the mean age equalled 29.4 years. The majority were students of nursing (109 persons) and 43 represented midwifery. Twenty-seven percent of all students declared tobacco smoking, 13% quit the habit and 60% never smoked. The studies proved that medical education and knowledge of harmfulness of tobacco smoking are the main reasons of non-smoking habits of the analysed group of students. The decision about taking up smoking is mostly influenced by smoking peers. This testifies to the need of further educational actions during nursing studies that would promote proper health behaviours in this field.

Wpływ czynników środowiskowych i edukacji na rozpowszechnienie palenia tytoniu wśród studentów Wydziału Pielęgniarstwa Akademii Medycznej w Lublinie

Palenie tytoniu przez personel medyczny jest problemem dotyczącym nie tylko naszego kraju. Pielęgniarki i położne w swej pracy mają bardzo bliski kontakt z pacjentami, przez co możliwość wpływania na ich zachowania zdrowotne. Pozytywny własny przykład w tym zakresie jest nieodzowny. Kształtowanie właściwych postaw i zachowań prozdrowotnych powinno być jednym z głównych celów edukacji akademickiej pielęgniarek i położnych. Celem pracy była próba analizy problemu nałogu palenia tytoniu wśród studentów Wydziału Pielęgniarstwa i Nauk o Zdrowiu Akademii Medycznej w Lublinie. Materiał stanowiły 152 anonimowe ankiety, wypełnione przez studentów studiów dziennych i zaocznych w roku akademickim 2001/2002. Użyto metody wywiadu standaryzowanego za pomocą kwestionariusza wywiadu. Materiał analizowano metodami statystyki opisowej. Wśród 152 respondentów przeważały kobiety (143 osoby), średnia wieku badanej grupy wynosiła 29,4 lat. Większość (109 badanych) stanowili studenci kierunku pielęgniarstwa, 43 reprezentowało kierunek położnictwo. Z ogółu badanych 27% studentów deklarowało palenie papierosów, 13% zerwało z nałogiem, a 60% nigdy nie paliło. Badania wykazały, że edukacja medyczna i świadomość szkodliwości nałogu palenia tytoniu są głównymi przyczynami niepalenia wśród ankietowanych studentów, a na decyzję o rozpoczęciu palenia największy wpływ mają palący rówieśnicy. Wskazuje to na potrzebę podejmowania dalszych działań edukacyjnych podczas studiów pielęgniarzkich, promujących właściwe zachowania prozdrowotne w tym zakresie.