

Characteristics of smoking behavior in adolescents, Sousse, Tunisia

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Background and aims:

Adolescence is a period of physical, psychological and socio-cultural transformation, but also of curiosity, experimentation and acquisition. It is mainly during adolescence that people are introduced to the use of legitimate psychoactive substances, such as alcohol and tobacco, as well as illicit substances such as cannabis. We aimed to determine the prevalence of smoking among high school students in the region of Sousse and to specify its characteristics.

Methods:

We conducted a cross-sectional study in two public schools in the governorate of Sousse during the 2017/2018 school year. The data were collected by anonymous self-administered questionnaire, then processed and analyzed using the SPSS software version 20.

Results:

A total of 294 students were included. The sex ratio was 0.78 with mean age of 17.03 years (standard deviation = 1.51). Results showed that 27.6% of students reported having already tasted tobacco. Among them, 61.8% of their parents did not know they were smoking. 17.28% started before the age of 14. Only 26% of them tried to stop but failed. Boys smoked twice as much as girls ($p=0.001$). In addition, 63% of young smokers used chicha, 48.1% drank alcohol, and 35.8% used cannabis at least once.

Conclusions:

The prevalence of smoking among these adolescents is worrying. Knowledge of related factors is important for program planning to prevent the tobacco epidemic in schools.

Key messages:

- Adolescence is the age of initiation for addictive substance use specially, Tobacco use.
- Knowledge of related factors is important for prevention program planning.