

## **Burden of tobacco smoking and its awareness**

**V.P. Hewageegana<sup>\*</sup>, K.S.V.L. Hemamala, H.M.B.G.R.P. Herath,  
H.M.S.S.K. Herath, M.G.B.U.G.W. Herath, R.H.S.M. Herath,  
W.A.K.M.D. Herath, H.D.M. Hettiarachchi, S.P. Hewauluwatte,  
J.A.A.C. Jayakody, J.M.C.C. Jayalath, J.H.S.K. Jayamaha and S.B. Adikari**

*Department of Anatomy, Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka*

*<sup>\*</sup>vimz\_impero@ymail.com*

Tobacco smoking is one of the leading causes of cardiovascular and respiratory diseases burdening the society. Smoking adversely affects individuals who smoke (first hand smoking), those who inhale smoke by being near smokers (second hand smoking) and those who are exposed to nicotine and other toxic residues left on indoor surfaces due to tobacco smoke (third hand smoking).

The present study aims to describe the pattern of exposure of individuals to smoking, the socio- economic factors associated with smoking and the awareness on the health effects of being exposed to tobacco smoke in Gangawata Korale Medical Officer of Health (MOH) area in Sri Lanka.

A cross sectional descriptive study was done with 648 randomly selected subjects using a self-administered questionnaire. Their awareness regarding the health effects of first hand, second hand and third hand smoking was assessed in three categories. Half or more correct answers in each category were considered as “Satisfactory Awareness” for that category. A separate section assessed smoking habits. The data was analysed using SPSS (Version 20).

Of the sample, 48% were males. The ages ranged from 18 to 44 years (mean=30). Ninety (14%) of the sample were smokers and almost all (98.9%) of them were males. There was a significant correlation between the level of education and smoking, the better educated were more likely to be non-smokers ( $P < 0.001$ ). The awareness on the health effects was found to be satisfactory in 499 (77%) regarding first hand smoking, 418 (64.5%) regarding second hand smoking and 305 (47.1%) regarding third hand smoking. There was a significant correlation between the level of education and the satisfactory awareness on the health effects of smoking ( $P=0.035$ ).

Public awareness campaigns mostly address first and second hand smoking. The novelty of the concept of third hand smoking is reflected in the limited awareness shown by the participants.

Although the study population is aware about the health effects of first hand smoking and second hand smoking, the awareness regarding third hand smoking is lacking. Educated people tend to be non-smokers with better awareness about the effects of tobacco smoke on health. Interventions should target uneducated males. The issue of third hand smoking need to be highlighted in awareness programmes.