

GLOBAL YOUTH TOBACCO SURVEY REPORT - Antigua
& Barbuda

Opening Statement: Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS)

Generally, the use of cigarettes and other tobacco products among youths is increasing, and as a result of this, health promotion and risk reduction can therefore never be over-emphasized. *It is therefore imperative that programmes and policies be put in place to inform our youths and to discourage them by making them more aware of the harmful effects of tobacco smoking.* The recent GYTS conducted in November 2000, gives an account of smoking prevalence among school children in Forms 1 - Forms 4 (grades 7 – 9), in the twin-island Nation of Antigua and Barbuda.

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

INTRODUCTION

Research has shown that tobacco use is a major ‘preventable’ cause of illness and death around the world. Martin et al 1997 and McSwain et al 1999 attributed tobacco use to the incidence of Congestive Heart Failure and Myocardial Infarction as 7% and 15% respectively in Antigua and Barbuda. Tobacco smoking is a risk factor for many diseases such as Cerebrovascular Diseases, Cardiovascular Diseases and Cancer. These have been found to be the leading causes of death in Antigua and Barbuda. (See Table A below)

Table A. Leading Causes of Death, Antigua & Barbuda 1999

RANK	CAUSE OF DEATH
1	MALIGNANT NEOPLASM
2	HYPERTENSIVE DISEASES
3	CEREBROVASCULAR DISEASES
4	HEART DISEASES
5	OTHER DISEASES OF THE RESPIRATORY SYSTEM

Source: Health Information Division, Ministry of Health, Antigua & Barbuda

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that approximately 4 million persons die prematurely each year from tobacco related illnesses, and if nothing is done to stem this tide, this figure is expected to rise to 10 million persons *each* year by 2030. Of these deaths, 70% will be from developing countries.

With this knowledge in its arsenal a campaign was launched. In 1998 the WHO, in collaboration with the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention initiated a global surveillance project on tobacco use among students that would allow for cross-country comparisons. The project, the Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS), uses a common methodology and protocol for collecting data on tobacco use among students.

In Antigua and Barbuda this school-based GYTS was conducted in November 2000 to look at tobacco usage of students in Forms 1 to Forms 4(grades 7 – 9), which is reflective of the 13 to 15 year old age groups. Similar surveys were being conducted in other territories in order to compare results. Some of the objectives were; to determine the level of tobacco use; to estimate age of initiation of cigarette use; to estimate the level of susceptibility.

The Health Information Division of the Ministry of Health in conjunction with the Medical Division appreciates the consent given by the Ministry of Education for the participation of the various schools in the conduct of the school-based GYTS. The participation of both teachers and students is indeed much appreciated.

The GYTS aided in the development of a comprehensive tobacco control programme. In that it shows the need to create school health programmes designed to help reduce tobacco use among youths. Health promotion and risk reduction among today's youths should not be taken lightly.

Around the world the incidence of tobacco use among young people continues to rise. This is achieved by the targeting of young people by the tobacco industry. The industry spends billions of dollars annually promoting a product that encourages young people to take up a behaviour that is harmful to their physical, mental and social development.

Thus, the need for health promotion and risk reduction in this targeted group is paramount.

The purpose of the GYTS is to develop baseline infrastructure capacity and information through research, to monitor the tobacco epidemic in Antigua and Barbuda. In addition to guiding national policy and programming strategies, the results of the GYTS will provide invaluable data to monitor progress toward many of the provisions ultimately contained within the 'Framework Convention on Tobacco Control' (FCTC).

METHOD

The assistance given by the Ministry of Education and the participation of both Teachers and Students in the conduct of this exercise is indeed very much appreciated. The Health Information Division would also like to express (its) gratitude to the field staff(s) and all others who made this venture a success. The questionnaire design allowed for (the) confidentiality and anonymity of students who participated. To elaborate further, (the) survey administration procedures were designed to protect student privacy and allow anonymous participation. Students submitted an optically scan-able answer sheet, containing no personal identifiers, which were then placed in a large envelope then sealed in a large box. Published reports do not include names of participating schools or students. All questionnaires were administered within the classroom. A sample frame of all schools containing Forms 1 to Forms 4 within the twin-island state of Antigua and Barbuda was obtained. A two-stage cluster sample design was used to produce a representative sample of the Forms 1 to Forms 4 student. Antigua & Barbuda GYTS Questionnaire contained 70 questions comprising of seven sections. These sections addressed; use and access, knowledge and attitudes, Exposure, Quitting, Media, School curriculum and background info.

Twenty-seven schools participated, representing 25 schools and 2 schools from Antigua and Barbuda respectively. The school response rate was 100%. Of the 1957 students sampled, 1795 students participated in the GYTS. This represents 1720 students and 75

students respectively, from Antigua and Barbuda. This shows a total student response rate of 91.7% and an overall responses rate of 91.7%.

The only demographic information sought related to age and sex. The aim is to find the prevalence of smoking among students and their age as a means to discover the age of initiation etc. Of the total responses 44.8% were *male students* and 55.2% were *female students*

School Level: a sample frame of all schools containing Forms 1 to Forms 4 (grades 7 – 9), within the twin-island State of Antigua and Barbuda was obtained. Schools were selected with probability proportional to school enrolment size.

Class Level: this sampling stage consisted of systematic equal probability sampling (with a random start) of classes from each school that participated in the survey. All students in the selected classes were eligible to participate in the survey.

RESULTS

Exposure to environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) has also been linked to deaths and diseases. ETS or second-hand smoke is a combination of the smoke from a burning cigarette and the smoke exhaled by the smoker. Although in Antigua and Barbuda there is no scientific study to clearly show the percentage of deaths that are attributed to exposure to tobacco smoke, scientific research has proven conclusively that tobacco smoke is a leading cause of certain life threatening diseases such as Cancer, Heart Disease and Diseases of the Respiratory System. In Antigua and Barbuda, statistics reveal that in the year 2000, these diseases were reported to be the cause of over 40 % of the deaths reported. Data from the GYTS indicate that: 24% of students have experimented with smoking at least once; 5% of students have smoked a cigarette in the previous thirty days; and 14% use some form of tobacco product. *See Table 1.*

Observation shows that of the (405) students who have ever smoked, one in four students were more likely to engage in smoking cigarettes. *Table 1* illustrates that Males were more likely than females to smoke cigarettes, represented by 29.2% and 18.2% respectively. It is worth mentioning that use of other tobacco products (10.1%) is nearly twice that of cigarette use (5.2%). The questionnaire did not seek to identify those 'other tobacco products'.

Table 1 also shows that one in four students attest to smoking cigarette before age ten (10) years. Here it was found that males were more likely at an early age to commence smoking. Also of significance is that of students who never smoked 10% of these are likely to start smoking. GYTS results reveal that there is some level of prevalence of smoking among youths. Taking into consideration the adverse effects of exposure to environmental tobacco smoke, it is pellucid that there are concerns that should be addressed in order to reduce the current and potential prevalence rate.

CONCLUSION

Research reveals that today in the Region of the Americas, tobacco causes more deaths than AIDS, alcohol and drug abuse, traffic accidents and violence combined. {Tobacco-free Youth No. 579} This preventable cause of so many deaths around the world, and especially so in the Americas, needs to be addressed. By regulating tobacco advertising, by enforcing laws and regulations designed to eliminate the sale of tobacco products to minors and, by establishing effective prevention programmes, these are positive steps towards addressing the tobacco issue.

Seemingly, the age of initiation is alarming. Children as young as nine and ten years old are experimenting with tobacco. This can ultimately lead to addiction. Not only to nicotine but to the use and abuse of other drugs (alcohol, narcotics). Such a lifestyle will more than likely eventually result in deaths, which could have been prevented.

Prevalance

Data from the GYTS (Table 1) shows the following:

23.6% of students had ever smoked cigarette, Males 29.2% and females 18.2%. Males were more likely to smoke than females; the data also revealed that one in four youths are more likely to smoke.

13.5% of students currently used any form of tobacco in the past 30 days; represented by Males 15.5% and Females 11.3%. The incidence of this for the sexes is approximately equal.

5.2% are current smokers, Males 5.9% and Females 4.2%. There was no significant difference between the sexes. However when compared to the 10.1% males who used any form of tobacco other than cigarette this shows that the use of the latter is twice that of youths who only use cigarette. Therefore, efforts should be placed on education to reduce the use in both groups. Due to the specific information generated from the questionnaire further research is needed in finding out what the other forms of tobacco products are.

Approximately ten percent (10%) of never smokers (of this 10.5% males and 7.1% females) are likely to start smoking. One sees the need for an aggressive campaign in targeting both groups in order to reduce the prevalence rate when coupled with the 5.2% who are current smokers.

Lastly, as it pertains to prevalence, the age of initiation is serious cause for concern. To the question: 'How old were you when you first tried smoking a cigarette?'

28.9% of students tried smoking before age 10. This shows that approximately one in four students were experimenting before they were ten years old. Significant also, is the revelation that based on GYTS results, approximately one in four youths are more likely to smoke.

Also of significance is that the age groups of 10 to 11 years and 12 to 13 years, are recorded as having the most students who have experimented with cigarette for the first time.

Knowledge and Attitudes

The GYTS is intended to enhance the capacity of countries in monitoring tobacco use among youths and guiding the implementation and evaluation of tobacco prevention and control programmes and policies. The data collected may be used to counter the aggressive campaign by major tobacco firms/companies. The data generated from the GYTS Global Surveillance would also allow for cross-country comparisons.

Of the students surveyed, approximately 27% think boys who smoke have more friends, while 41% think boys who smoke have less friends. Whereas, approximately 15% of the students surveyed think girls who smoke have more friends, while 58% think girls who smoke have less friends.

On the subject of attractiveness, 6% think boys who smoke look more attractive while approximately 78% think boys who smoke are less attractive. On the same question, 6% think girls who smoke look more attractive while approximately 80% think girls are less attractive when seen smoking a cigarette.

Of never smokers, one in four think that boys who smoke have more friends while 36.7% of current smokers share the same view.

There is a significant difference when asked about the popularity of girls 15.3% of never smokers think that girls who smoke have more friends, while 21.3% of current smokers share the same view.

A large percentage of students, (71.6%), think that smoking cigarettes makes an individual lose weight. 5.3% believed that smoking aided in weight gain, 23.1% saw no difference.

A significant percentage, (79.5%), of the students surveyed, are aware of the difficulty in quitting cigarette smoking, as reflected in the question; 'Do you think it is safe to smoke for only a year or two as long as you quit after that?'

10% of current smokers revealed that they had decided to stop smoking so as to improve their health. There is a need to target that 90% of the current smokers, providing them with appropriate information on the harmful effects of cigarettes and other tobacco products.

It was also observed that more fathers than mothers smoked. Six (6) in ten (10) students think smoke from others is harmful to them, while almost eight (8) in ten (10) youth smokers want to stop.

Access and Availability

In Antigua and Barbuda, to date (October 2002), there is a complete absence of laws, which forbid selling cigarettes to minors. The danger of cigarettes and other tobacco products is not fully understood by some parents. As a result, some of these parents who smoke, persist in sending minors to purchase these products. The enactment and strict enforcement of appropriate laws will deter the sale of these products to minors by merchants/vendors.

According to data from Antigua and Barbuda's GYTS, *Table 2* reveals that thirty-three percent (33%) of current youth smokers, smoke at home. More girls 41.2% as compared to 28.2% boys smoke at home.

Thus, the availability of and access to cigarettes, is serious cause for concern. *Table 1* further shows that 13.5% of current youth smokers purchase cigarette from a store/vendor without any difficulty.

According to *Table 2*, fifty-seven percent (57%) of current youth smokers were not refused purchase because of their age. As cited earlier, there is need for legislation to curb this practice.

Minors may construe this easy access to and availability of tobacco as acceptance. Continued unabated access will promote habitual usage, which will more than likely lead to addiction and eventually, lead to death.

Access and availability is made even easier by merchants/vendors who sell cigarettes loose (i.e. single). Benson & Hedges was the most popular brand of cigarette smoked by students. However most smokers show no usual brand.

In terms of other harmful products, marijuana use was most noticeable.

Environmental Tobacco Smoke

Facts:

- ETS contaminates the air and is retained in clothing, curtains and furniture.
- Over 4,000 different chemicals have been identified in ETS.
- There is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke.
- ETS is a real and significant threat to Public Health.

Table 3 reveals that between 14% and 43% reported being exposed to smoke from others in their home, here current smokers were 3 times more likely than never smokers to be exposed. Moreover current smokers were more exposed to smoke from others in public places than never smokers. Seven (7) in ten (10) students would support a ban on smoking in public places. Demarcation of areas is needed to protect non-smokers, as

there is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke. Six (6) in ten (10) students think smoke from others is harmful to them.

Eighty-three percent (83%) of the students surveyed think persons who smoke around others should ask others for permission before lighting up. Of this eighty-eight percent (88%) said that they would not permit smokers to smoke in their presence.

Eighteen percent (18%) of students live in homes where others smoke 45.9% are around others who smoke in places outside their homes. Approximately 20% of students have one or more parents who smoke and a relatively small percent 6% have most or all friends who smoke.

Cessation

Table 4 shows that seven (7) out of ten (10) of current smokers during the past year have tried unsuccessfully to stop smoking. Approximately 78% want to stop smoking while only 55% ever received help to stop smoking. The main reason given for those who have stopped smoking – was to improve their health. It may be important to note that by observation, it appears as if the threat of the effect of nicotine addiction is taken lightly by youths. This is manifested by the response given to the question: ‘Do you think you would be able to stop smoking if you wanted to?’ where some 86% responded in the affirmative.

Media and Advertising

According to *Table 5*, over a 30-day period, approximately 3 in 4 students saw an anti-smoking message. This countered with 2 in 4 who also saw pro-tobacco messages in newspapers and magazines. Of never smokers, 1 in 10 have an object with a cigarette brand logo on it, while 1 in 4 current smokers have the same. *Table 5* further reveals that of never smokers, approximately 10% were offered ‘free’ cigarette by a tobacco company, while approximately 40% of current smokers were offered the same. One sees a significant difference between these two groups.

It can therefore be said that too many young people are exposed to the offer of free cigarettes, given the earlier indication where we saw that approximately 10% of never smokers were likely to begin smoking. There is thus a dire need for restrictions to be imposed on cigarette companies given the easy access and availability.

The glamorisation of smoking in movies by actors/actresses is a serious cause of concern, approximately 50% of all students have seen a lot of smoking by actors/actresses in movies only 4% of students reported never seeing actors/actresses smoking in movies.

School Curriculum

There is need for more effective and aggressive school programmes in making the youths more aware of the cause and effect of smoking cigarettes.

As could be seen in *Table 6*, forty-three percent (43%) had been taught in class, during the past year about the dangers of smoking and thirty-one percent (31%) had discussed in class, during the past year, reasons people their age smoke.

GYTS results also reveal that fifty-two percent (52%) had been taught in class, during the past year, the effects of tobacco use.

The End