

Quotes: “A Nationally Representative Case-Control Study of Smoking And Death in India”

NOTE: Under strict media embargo until:

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Disclaimers:

1. This study is only one of the consequences of the patterns of tobacco use in India and not the causes of those patterns.
2. The views represented in the paper and in these quotes are not necessarily the official views of the Government of India or the study sponsors.

Quotes

It is truly remarkable that one single factor, namely smoking, which is entirely preventable, accounts for nearly one in ten of all deaths in India. It is also very disturbing to see that even the poorest of the poor, who can buy very few other things, suffer so much from an injury that may be self-inflicted, but which is hugely promoted by commercial interests in the tobacco industry. The empirical results presented in this study bring out forcefully the need for immediate public action in this much neglected field.

Amartya Sen, Nobel Laureate in Economics, 2001, Harvard University

We are going to take up the results of this study very seriously. I am particularly concerned about protecting India's 600 million (60 crore) young people below the age of 30. These young people are our national assets, and they must be protected against smoking deaths. We plan to take comprehensive steps against tobacco, and strengthen our Tobacco Regulatory Authority to enforce the laws.

Dr Abumani Ramadoss, India's Health Minister

Asia is the battleground for global tobacco control, and India, Indonesia and Bangladesh represent just a few of the countries which lie in the path of the tobacco tsunami. This study should sound the alarm that we desperately, and quickly need action to curb this most avoidable of epidemics.

Dr. Poonam Singh, Deputy Regional Director World Health Organization, South -East Asian Regional Office, New Delhi.

In India, there is widespread ignorance about the risks of smoking, and this study serves as a landmark to raise awareness not only among smokers, but also among public health physicians, doctors, and administrators that smoking is uniquely hazardous.

Dr. Srinath Reddy, President, Public Health Foundation of India

Women who smoke are equally at risk of being killed as are men. I am alarmed by the statistics for women in this historic study. The gender disadvantage that Indian women face in society can only be made worse by smoking. The key message here is simple: Quit! Lead by example. Help protect life that's worth living.

Nafisa Ali, National Swimming Champion 1974, Miss India 1976, Actor and Social Activist.

The study shows that India bears the double burden of tobacco related deaths and resultant poverty due to the death of the main wage earners in their prime. This is especially true in underprivileged rural areas. The study findings should prompt us to collectively promote the implementation of a wide spectrum of cost-effective strategies to confront tobacco use and save lives.

Dr. Salim Habayeb, WHO Country Representative, India

The Fogarty International Center at NIH is proud to be a sponsor of this study. It has been an extraordinary effort to survey over 1 million homes. But that task looks small compared to the enormous and avoidable toll that smoking will cause among Indian men and women.

Dr. Roger Glass, Director, Fogarty International Centre, National Institutes of Health

In urban India, the leading causes of death from smoking are heart disease, chiefly acute heart attack. This study confirms what our research group has also found, that smoking can kill you effectively, and does so young in life in India. Even smoking a few bidis or cigarettes-can be fatal.

Professor Salim Yusuf, Professor of Cardiology, McMaster University

While the overall hazards of smoking are similar worldwide, the specific causes by which smoking kills varies in different countries. This study demonstrates the unique nature of how it is already dramatically worsening Indian health — from tuberculosis for example. That smoking accounts for much of the gap between male and female deaths in middle age is a startling and important finding.

Dr. Jaime Sepulveda, Director of Integrated Health Systems Development, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

This is an important and powerful study that should help accelerate tobacco control in India. The study shows that bidi cigarette and other cigarette smoking is already killing around 900,000 Indians a year, most of them in the prime of life, and that smoking even a few bidis or cigarettes a day significantly increases the risk of death.

Dr. Tom Frieden, Health Commissioner, New York City

This research confronts us with the scale of the problem. It shows that smoking kills in different ways in different areas. While the majority of smoking-related deaths in rural India were linked to TB, in India's urban settings, heart attacks were the first cause of death amongst smokers. The results suggest an even higher risk of smoking-related cardiovascular disease amongst Indian populations than predicted. This may well apply in Indian populations around the world, including here in the UK. However, be it in Delhi or Birmingham, the same thing works: quitting. This is why the MRC is a founding member of Grand Challenges in Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases, which has as one of its aims to assist in smoking cessation initiatives worldwide.

Professor Leszek Borysiewicz, Chief Executive of the Medical Research Council (UK)

It is extremely worrying that smokers in India are twice as likely to die in middle age as non-smokers. Nine in ten cases of lung cancer are caused by smoking and cancer deaths in India will continue to rise unless concerted action is taken to reduce smoking rates. It's clear that the best way for smokers to reduce their risk of cancer, and many other life threatening diseases, is to stop smoking entirely. In the UK we have seen a decrease in lung cancer rates over the past 30 years as smoking rates decline, particularly among men.

Jean King, Director of Tobacco Control, Cancer Research UK.