



REPORT ON WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY HELD AT THE  
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI, SCHOOL OF MEDICINE (KNH CAMPUS),  
ON 31<sup>ST</sup> MAY 2016

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background information

In 1987, World Health Organization (WHO) member states introduced World No Tobacco Day with the aim of drawing global attention to the tobacco epidemic and the preventable diseases associated with its use. This annual event is aimed at informing the public on the dangers associated with the use of tobacco, the business practices of tobacco companies, what WHO is doing to fight the tobacco epidemic, and what people around the world can do to claim their right to health and healthy living and to protect future generations. WHO carries out World No Tobacco Day campaign using different themes, this year's theme was 'Get ready for plain packaging.'



Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable illnesses, disability and death. Worldwide, tobacco use causes nearly 6 million deaths per year, and current trends show that tobacco use will cause more than 8 million deaths annually by 2030. These statistics are a clear indication that tobacco use is a Public Health concern

that is why Public Health Club (PHC) members saw the need of having a students' forum to mark this year's World No Tobacco Day. The students' forum was aimed at enlightening the students on the effects of tobacco use and their role, as the youth, in fighting this epidemic.

## **1.2 The Event**

The students' forum was held at Lecture Theatre 3 in Kenyatta National Hospital (KNH) from 5.30 PM to 7.30 PM. It was started off by Jemimah Muthoni with a word of prayer after which she invited the Dean of the School of Medicine. The Dean, Professor Were, welcomed the guests and students who had attended the forum. He also urged the students to be ambassadors in the war against tobacco because change starts with the youth.



*Professor Were, Dean – School of Medicine, welcoming guests to the event.*

The students' forum was a discussion where questions from the students were directed to a board of panelist. This activity was moderated by Morgan Muchemi. The panel comprised of:

- Mr. Newton Mburu- KNH Youth Rehabilitation Centre
- Ms. Emma Wanyonyi- Institute of Legislative Affairs (ILA)
- Ms. Dorcas Kiptui- Ministry of Health
- Dr. Elizabeth Wala - Kenya Medical Association CEO
- Dr. Musau- Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI)
- Professor Peter Odhiambo- Kenya Tobacco Control Board
- Reverend Tom Otieno- Lavington United Church
- Mr. Joel Gitali - Kenya Tobacco Control Alliance Chairperson
- Dr. Ochanda- Executive Director of International Commission of Prevention of addiction

Professor Odhiambo was glad to share news of receiving a WHO award on behalf of the Tobacco Control Board Kenya, in recognition of outstanding contribution to tobacco control.



*Prof. Peter Odhiambo (center) holding the award, with Dr. Tom Olewe (2<sup>nd</sup> left), Mr. Gitali (2<sup>nd</sup> right) and students.*





*Prof. Odhiambo and Prof. Were with the award.*

## 2.0 DISCUSSION

### 2.1 **Smoking among the youth**

Most of the youth who smoke were introduced to the habit within the ages of 7-21 years. They start after seeing family members and relatives abusing the substance so most of them see it as a norm. The Youth Rehabilitation Center at KNH has a lot of teenagers who come in with addiction to tobacco among other substances of abuse. The youth present were urged to take up the role of informing fellow youth on the effects of smoking and being advocates for change in the society.

## **2.2 Role of Legislation**

Law plays a very vital role in the fight against tobacco epidemic, in particular the Tobacco Control Act of 2007. The law prohibited advertising of cigarettes, advocated for plain packaging and warning on the effects of the product. According to the Global Youth Tobacco Survey, there has been a decrease in the number of adults who smoke since the passing of the Tobacco Control Act. The act has to be implemented fully for there to be optimal change bringing in the need for law enforcement officers in the different counties. These officers are trained community workers who will educate the community on effects of smoking while ensuring the act is implemented effectively.

The law on taxation of cigarette has also been key in reducing the number of smokers. The tax was increased leading to an increase in the price of cigarettes thus reducing the affordability. The rule on buying a whole packet as opposed to sticks of cigarettes has also discouraged the buying of cigarettes as it is not cost effective to buy a whole packet. Smoking zones, though not ideal, have also played a role in the reduction of the number of smokers in Kenya.

## **2.3 Role of the Church**

The church is key in the fight against drugs particularly tobacco smoking. The church educates the youth on the effects of tobacco use. They also engage the youth in activities so as to keep them occupied and away from harmful behaviors. The church also counsels those who are already addicted to drugs and nurtures them back to health.

## **2.4 Doctors for Doctors**

Doctors are in a very demanding career and tend to be under a lot of pressure more often than not. This pressure tends to drive them into drug abuse, particularly smoking and alcohol consumption. The doctors for doctors is an initiative by KMA to help doctors who are struggling with substance abuse among other problems. Most doctors will hesitate seeking help at clinics or hospitals because of the risk of

running into their patients; this initiative ensures that their issues are handled privately, therefore maintaining their patients' confidence in them.



*Dr. Elizabeth Wala, CEO of Kenya Medical Association.*

## **2.5 Shisha**

Shisha contains 0.9% nicotine, 19% hard drugs (heroin, cocaine, bhang etc.) in addition to all the chemicals in cigarettes. Shisha, which is quite popular among the young people, is probably more harmful than cigarettes because an individual smokes a lot of puffs within one sitting. Other than that, more than 40 of the products were banned for containing hard drugs. Shisha is an area of great concern because most people do not think of it as a harmful drug yet it is quite lethal.



*Attendees of the event.*

### **3.0 CONCLUSION**

The youth have a very big and crucial role to play in the fight against tobacco use, the students present were urged to be advocates for good health by leading the way and setting a good example to the rest. They were also urged to take part in outreach programs and the different campaigns against tobacco and other substances of abuse.

The event was then concluded by Professor Odhiambo on behalf of the Dean, Professor Were. James Wachira then gave the vote of thanks and Jemimah Muthoni closed with a word of prayer.

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