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Perception of risks and benefits of smoking among adolescents of Glacier International College, Nepal

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Background: Tobacco use is one of the important preventable causes of death and a leading public health problem all over the world. Multiple factors are involved in the initiation of smoking in adolescents and young adults. Adolescents may incorrectly believe that cigarette smoking is less risky than other behaviors, such as alcohol consumption and drug use, and they do not understand the short-term effect and addictive nature of smoking.

Objectives: The main objective of this study was to find out the perceived physical risks, social risks, addiction risks and perceived benefits of smoking among adolescents.

Method: A descriptive cross sectional study was conducted among 100 adolescents using stratified random sampling and self-administered questionnaire. In order to assess the perceived risks and benefits of smoking, questionnaire developed by Song et al. and Halpern-Felsher et al. was used.

Result: Among 100 adolescents, 38 were female. The mean perceived risk was 60% and mean perceived benefit was 32%. There was a significant difference between age and perceived physical risks, social risks and benefits of smoking. Perceived benefits of smoking had a significant difference with educational level and smoking behavior of respondents as well.

Conclusion: Adolescents perceive both risks and benefits of smoking. In order to discourage or prevent adolescents from initiating smoking, future intervention programs should focus on communicating not only the health risks but also the social and addiction risks as well as counteract the benefits associated with smoking. There is a felt need for smoking cessation program and necessity for school based smoking prevention programs.

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