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Effective use of code of criminal procedure (CrPC) for shutting down of Hookah (Sheesha) bars: A case series from Punjab, India**Rakesh K Gupta**

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Background & Aim: Tobacco in Hookah is known to be carcinogenic. Hookah smoking usually delivers Nicotine which is highly addictive and cancer-causing chemical. Presently there is no provision under any law in India to ban Hookah. But running a Hookah Bar violates section 144 of CrPC, if promulgated. Section 144 of CrPC gives power to District Magistrate, a Sub-divisional Magistrate or any other Executive Magistrate to issue order in urgent cases of nuisance of apprehended danger to human life, health or safety. The objective of the study was to assess the effectiveness of code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) for shutting down of Hookah (Sheesha) bars.

Methods: The present study was conducted in the period of April 2011 to September 2017 in Punjab. In 2013 Punjab Government had issued a Demi-Official letter to the Deputy Commissioners of all the districts to promulgate section 144 of CrPC against all the Hookah (Sheesha) bars. Health Advisory in year 2013 was issued regarding Hookah/Shisha/smoke pipe, by whatever names it is called. Regular enforcement drives were conducted by the District Level Task force. Apart from this regular IEC activities were done at State, district to create awareness regarding the ill effects of Hookah.

Results: Total 17 Hookah bars have been raided in various districts of Punjab. FIRs have been launched against Hookah bar owners by the Police department under section 144 of CrPC. No complaint regarding a functional Hookah (Sheesha) bar has been received anywhere in Punjab.

Conclusion: The strict measures undertaken by the Punjab government against Hookah bars was detrimental to functioning of Hookah bars in the state. Strong inter-departmental co-ordination, regular enforcements drives, Awareness activities are the reinforcers in shutting down of Hookah (Sheesha) bars.

Biography

Rakesh K Gupta is the Deputy Director, Non-Communicable Diseases, Department of Health & Family Welfare, Punjab. He has expertise in managing National Non-Communicable diseases Programs especially Blindness Control/Tobacco Control Programs and has professional experience of 33 years in service. He has represented MOHFW in WHO ENDS Consultation in Panama 2016 and WHO consultation on Plain packaging in Geneva 2017.

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