

LETTER TO EDITOR

Smokeless Tobacco—A Deadly Addiction

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Dear Editor,

We would like to respectfully draw attention to the widespread use of smokeless tobacco (SLT) among young people, through your renowned journal.

Although there are several tobacco products available, smokeless tobacco is the most commonly used¹. SLT is being used more frequently, which can be attributable to its low price and straightforward accessibility in every other store around. SLTs are oral tobacco products that are non-combustible. It can also be breathed through the nose; however, it is typically inserted under the tongue or in the space between the cheeks and gums. SLTs come in a variety of forms, including as dipping tobacco, snuff, betel-quid, *mawa*, *naswar*, and *gutka*.

In Pakistan, *gutka* looks to be the most popular SLT, both in rural and urban areas. Approximately 15% of men and 10% of women in Pakistan use different types of SLT². Young people and adults use it most frequently. Young adults under the age of 30 have high rates of tobacco use and prevalence, and it may be responsible for 12% of all tobacco-related deaths globally². The prevalence and use of SLT as a substitute source of nicotine addiction has substantially expanded as a result of the tightening regulations against smoking in enclosed areas and public places². Most people choose smokeless tobacco over cigarettes, perhaps because it is portable and simple to use. A sizable portion of smokers have acknowledged utilizing SLT as a method of quitting³. However, they largely failed to accomplish it.

The SLT consumers experience a range of health problems. Nicotine, which has negative health effects on users, is the principal component of SLT. Furthermore, it is well-known that nicotine poses a significant danger for a number of disorders. Ash and slaked lime raise the pH of the oral cavity and speed up the process of nicotine absorption via the mucous membrane of the mouth⁴. Smokeless tobacco has a significant role in the high rate of preventable diseases that Pakistan has to deal with⁵. Additionally, use of SLT has been linked to numerous

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illnesses including cardiovascular disease, gum disease, mouth cancer, and oesophageal cancer. Mouth may also develop leukoplakia or erythroplakia, which are white or red areas that have the potential to develop into cancer⁶.

At the moment, there are no laws that can stop the use of SLTs, particularly among those with low income rates. It is suggested that the government should outlaw SLT goods or at the very least make them more expensive. We should launch a campaign and create laws to alert people of their negative impact.

The most effective avenue for reaching the public about quitting smokeless tobacco and promoting a healthy lifestyle is the social media. We ought to stop its promotion and advertising. Government should make effective policies to curtail its use. Use of social media based awareness campaigns must be initiated and publicised in order to deal with this deadly addiction among the masses.

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