
INTRODUCTION

This special supplement for *Salud Pública de México: "Tobacco Control in the Americas: from Evidence to Public Policy"* is part of the ongoing collaboration of the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to support the countries of the Americas in the area of tobacco control surveillance and monitoring in compliance with Article 20 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC).

The WHO FCTC has been recognized as an important tool for the prevention of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) as has been highlighted in many United Nations documents, including the Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of NCDs in 2011, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Four of the measures contained in the treaty and known as "best buys" (increase in tobacco taxes, smoke-free environments, warning about the risks of tobacco through health warnings on tobacco packages and media campaigns, and total bans on tobacco advertisement, promotion and sponsorship), are recommended by the WHO as very cost-effective interventions that are also high-impact and feasible for implementation, even in resource-constrained settings.

The aforementioned Article 20 call Parties to establish progressively a national system for the epidemiological surveillance of tobacco consumption and related social, economic and health indicators; recognizing the importance of financial and technical assistance from international and regional intergovernmental organizations and other bodies. An indicator of tobacco use is part of the WHO Global Monitoring Framework (GMF). A target of a 30% relative reduction is expected to be achieved by 2025.

The Global Tobacco Surveillance System (GTSS) allows countries not only to collect the information needed

for monitoring the trends of tobacco consumption in youth and adults, but also to monitor the implementation of tobacco control policies mandated by the WHO FCTC. It has been providing data for the region for more than 15 years now.

Countries need accurate and updated data on tobacco use to develop their tobacco control plans, measure the impact of implemented interventions and make adjustments when necessary. As it is shown in some of the articles in this volume, the information provided by the different components of the GTSS has been of paramount importance to make the case for specific tobacco legislation or policies and to counteract the misleading arguments that usually the tobacco industry presents in trying to undermine tobacco control. Still, it is important to strengthen the translation of GTSS data into action at the country level.

This supplement is an initiative that is a result of a joint effort among the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization, the National Institute of Public Health from Mexico (INSP) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to encourage countries part of the GTSS to publish the evidence on their patterns of tobacco consumption, policies and interventions.

There are experiences for countries from all sub-regions in the Americas. Five papers show the results obtained from the Global Tobacco Youth Survey (GYTS) in Mexico, Bolivia, Suriname, Costa Rica and Uruguay. Other two papers use a sub-regional approach to analyze the tobacco consumption in youth in South America and Non-Latin Caribbean countries.

As for the adult population manuscripts from Panama, Brazil and Argentina, they address issues related to cessation, illegal trade, and exposure of tobacco advertising at point of sale. The status of tobacco consumption among dental students in Latin America is also presented.

Finally an assessment of the progress of the WHO FCTC in the Americas over the last 10 years complete the

set of thirteen manuscripts showing the implementation of the Global Tobacco Surveillance System, and its use in monitoring the implementation of the WHO FCTC. The editorials on the Supplement highlight the global challenges in tobacco control, the advances reached in the Americas and the need for strong surveillance systems. The Head of the WHO Framework Convention Secretariat presents the Protocol to Eliminate the Illicit Trade of Tobacco Products, a new international treaty in itself that is open for the ratification of FCTC Parties. These editorials underline the complex and evolving

situation of tobacco control, but also that countries are advancing in counteracting this lethal epidemic.

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