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Letter to the Editor

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Smoking and alcohol abuse by medical practitioners: an insult to the noble profession

Sir,

Smoking and alcohol are the dreadful dangerous factors which not only affect the lives of the culprits but also the innocents. Smoking is the greatest cause of illness and premature death in the world. It is most common cause of oral and lung cancers. It is one of the risk factor for obstructive lung diseases (like emphysema, chronic bronchitis, COPD), heart diseases, brain strokes, infertility in women etc., Alcohol consumption is one of the dangerous habits and causes liver damage, brain damage and heart attack. Though alcohol is said to enhance high density lipoproteins and useful to us in many aspects when consumed in less quantities, it may lead to dependence on consuming daily. Ill effects of alcohol and smoking on human body never end.

Every day we see lots of accidents happening due to alcohol. Two weeks back in Hyderabad engineering college students in car who were drunk in the evening crashed the divider with high speed entered the opposite lane, jumped over another car and crushed car resulting in deadly accident which had costed the lives of a software engineer working in USA immediately and hospitalizing 3 people of which 2 (a 7 year old kid and an elderly man) were expired. One can spoil ones health by smoking and drinking alcohol. But who has given them the right to kill innocent people?

We know all the family members and the colleagues of an active smoker are regarded as passive smokers and they even have the same risk factors as that of active smokers but with less intensity. How can they risk others' lives by smoking?

No one in this world knows better about adverse effects of smoking and alcohol other than a medical practitioner. Abstinence from alcohol is effective only when counselling and strict preventive measures if practiced under the supervision of medical practitioner. But if medical practitioners encourage them by smoking and consuming alcohol themselves, then who else in this world can create awareness among people about these two evils.

Treating the patients who have been suffering from these ill effects and visualizing the deaths of the innocent people due to alcoholics couldn't it bring change in the attitude of medical practitioner towards alcohol and smoking? Recently I have seen an elderly medical

practitioner working in one of the famous private hospital smoking in a shop besides the hospital in front of many patients, medical students and society. Isn't it a disgrace to him being in a noble and respectable profession? Do you think the patients, students and society respect him? Two months back, in a night party, few doctors were found to be drunk completely. Even in the everyday news we find some doctors who drink during the working hours, at night and create nuisance to the patients and society. The prevalence of cigarette smoking among Japanese physicians was 27.1% for men and 6.8% for women in 2001.³

Thirty-eight percent of the general practitioners were found to be smokers in Netherlands in 2002. A study in Kerala in India shows the prevalence of smoking in 13.1% physicians in 2006. Prevalence of alcohol abuse is 22.4% of the junior students, 20% of the senior students, 8.9% of the residents and 6.5% of the physicians in Turkey in 2004. Substance use is reported between 32.5% to as high as 81.2% among medical students, interns and house physicians in India in 2000. Prevalence of alcohol and tobacco use among UG medical students was 16.6% and 8.0% respectively, whereas prevalence was 31.5% and 14.5% respectively for PG medical students in 2015. Smoking and alcohol abuse for a slight euphoretic effect may result in death of many people. Isn't this wrong?

Being in a noble and respectable position how can they smoke and drink alcohol? Being a smoker or alcoholic how can they advise people to stop smoking and consuming alcohol? And if patients see him drinking and smoking, will they follow his suggestion of abstinence from alcohol and smoking.

Even the government encourages smoking and alcohol due to high taxes paid by the liquor industry. The industries encourage it for huge profits. But the sufferers are the students, people by the dreadful diseases and victims are the innocent people who are not involved in the smoking and alcohol. Our Social Sir, Sharma Sir used to say us to first follow good things before we give preaches to others. So medical practitioners have to realize the ill effects of smoking and alcohol abuse and stop smoking before they suggest their patients to obstinate from alcohol and smoking.

It is high time to learn from our mistakes. Medical Practitioners should change their attitude towards

smoking and alcohol abuse. Let us open our eyes to save the nobility of the profession.

T. Naveena*

MBBS 2nd Year, Apollo Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, Hyderabad, Telangana, India

*Correspondence to:

T. Naveena

E-mail: naveena.t.234@gmail.com

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