period from 1994 to 1999 (60780 donors) prevalence of HCV, HIV and HBsAg was reported to be 0.78%, 0.26% and 1.7% respectively. It is seen that over a period of time prevalence of HCV and HIV has increased whereas that of HBsAg has decreased. Decrease in HbsAg prevalence could perhaps be related to increasing use of HBV vaccine.

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PATTERN OF USE OF TOBACCO BASED PRODUCTS IN URBAN AREA OF CHANDIGARH

Sir,
The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates the number of smokers aged 15 years and above to be 1.1 billion which constitutes a third of world's population in this age group. In industrialized countries, where the prevalence of smoking is decreasing, 42% men and 24% women smoke. The corresponding figures in developing countries are 47% and 7%, respectively. These nations are witnessing a substantial rise in the number of young adults taking up smoking as also the per-capita consumption of tobacco in its various forms.

Tobacco-based Products (TBPs) have medical, social as well as economic bearings on their users. This differs not only across nations but also within various regions of a country. Although several studies on tobacco use have been reported from different parts of the country, no such study has been conducted in Chandigarh previously, which has its own characteristic socio-demographic profile such as 90% population living in urban area. In the light of these facts, this study was undertaken to know the pattern of TBPs users in Union Territory of Chandigarh, to determine the knowledge, attitude and practices of people regarding TBPs use and to ascertain the knowledge of the users regarding the health hazards due to use of various TBPs.

The Union Territory of Chandigarh, located around 250 kms north-west of Delhi, has a total population of 9,00,635 as on March 01, 2001. In toto 1095 (95%) subjects aged > 15 years (532 males and 563 females) were studied using a pre-tested questionnaire designed as per WHO guidelines. The study revealed that nearly 20% subjects aged above 15 years were found to be users of tobacco-based products, predominantly smoking. Maximum prevalence was seen among middle-aged males. The use of tobacco-based products was six times higher among males than females. It also rose with increase in age. Only few subjects were aware of the health hazards related to use of tobacco-based products. Socialisation was seen to be a minor factor for use of tobacco-based products. Key factors identified to be responsible for non-use of tobacco-based products were health risks, bad habit and religious/social sanctions.

However, the prevalence among both the genders is much lower than the average for developing countries as a whole. TBPs use among males in Chandigarh has been found to be comparable to that in Delhi. Higher figures ranging from 53% to 56% have been reported from the Baltic Republics. The prevalence of tobacco use among women in this study has been much lower than the reported values of 15% in Bhavnagar and 67% in Andhra Pradesh.

Though the prevalence of TBPs users in Chandigarh is lower than in other cities of India and developing countries as a whole, yet its increasing trend in the middle aged people is disturbing. The situation needs to be controlled and mitigated by carrying out regular antismoking campaign and enforcing the legislation.

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