



EXPERTS SPEAK



For quite some time there was a need felt to have a one-stop window for all information on tobacco control. The E-RCTC greatly fills this gap for the country. We at NICPR and the WHO FCTC Global Knowledge Hub on Smokeless Tobacco remains committed to contribute, share and use the information from this unique platform.

Prof. Ravi Mehrotra

Director, ICMR- National Institute of Cancer Prevention and Research



The E-RCTC is a unique platform from where we can fetch all the information related to tobacco control activities in India. It will immensely help the programming officers, academicians, researchers and other stakeholders by providing correct, reliable information and facts about tobacco control.

It will also help in the implementation of tobacco control laws & programmes, and curb the menace of tobacco use.

Dr. Nirlep Kaur

State Programme Officer,
NTCP, Punjab



The E-RCTC is an inimitable initiative for all those who are associated with this cause. This forum provides updated and authenticated information in advancing tobacco control initiatives across the country. It is the first point of reference as instant support to policymakers and

program implementers.

Govind Kumar Tripathi

Technical Advisor (NTCP)
International Union against Tuberculosis
and Lung Disease (The Union)



The E-RCTC will ensure all relevant information, national and state level orders and technical resources on tobacco control could be accessed by common people, in general, and tobacco control advocates, in particular. This resource centre will also help the policymakers in decision making.

Mr. Nirmayala Mukerjee

Director, MANT

Gaining global prominence: E-RCTC

India's first E-Resource Centre for Tobacco Control (E-RCTC), a joint initiative of PGIMER Chandigarh and The International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union), has started making its presence felt in India and abroad.

The official portal of E-RCTC, <https://rctcpgi.org/>, is attracting traffic from across the length and breadth of India, and countries in Europe, America, Africa and Asia.

TOP FIVE COUNTRIES

- INDIA
- US
- FRANCE
- CHINA
- JAPAN



Within just six months of its launching, the portal of E-RCTC has clocked over 20,000 visitors from across the globe. Nearly 67 per cent of these visitors are from India while the remaining are from countries like US, France, China, Japan, UK, Germany, UAE, Malaysia etc.

E-RCTC intends to emerge as one-point reference system for varied tobacco control information and activities. Moreover, the centre aspires to be an enabler to drive collaborations between tobacco control organisations and foster tobacco control partnerships.

E-RCTC showcases an array of valuable and vital information related to tobacco control initiatives under various heads like: Policies & Legislations, Circulars & Orders, National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP), Publication, IEC Material et al.

This structuring of the content on E-RCTC is such that the visitors, who are from different backgrounds, can access the information required within no time.

There are many takers for the information available on E-RCTC. It is capacitating the grassroots workforce involved in tobacco related programmes. Officials at administrative levels has been approaching E-RCTC for accessing latest advisories and notifications to counter tobacco use. Researchers and academicians are seeking this platform to acquire knowledge related to best practices and innovations in tobacco control will get enough information from the portal.

Tobacco-Free Times released

Tobacco-Free Times, a publication on tobacco control initiatives at state and national levels was released at School of Public Health, PGIMER Chandigarh on March 16. The first edition of the bi-monthly publication was released by Mr K.S Pannu, Commissioner-Food and Drug Administration, Punjab; Mr K.K Yadav, Commissioner-Municipal Corporation Chandigarh and Ms Harjinder Kaur, Chairperson-Chandigarh Commission for Protection of Child Rights during a consultation on Protecting minors from Tobacco/Nicotine: Going beyond Cigarettes and other Tobacco products Act (COTPA) 2003.



Orientation-cum-sensitisation programme in Meghalaya



A state-level orientation-cum-sensitisation programme on National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP) was held in Shillong, Meghalaya on March 27. Officials from various departments like Taxation, Education, Police, Law, Food Safety, Health and Legal Metrology attended the programme, along with representatives of several NGOs. Mr Pravin Bakshi, State Level Coordination Committee, Member Secretary-cum-Health Secretary, Govt. of Meghalaya, presided over the programme. Dr. Rana J Singh, Deputy Regional Director, The Union SEA, was the resource person for the programme, which was followed by training of stakeholders of District Level Coordination Committee on March 28.

SLCC constituted in Puducherry and Meghalaya

For the overall implementation of National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP) and the Cigarettes & Other Tobacco Products Act-2003 (COTPA), State-Level Coordination Committee (SLCC) was constituted in Puducherry and Meghalaya in March.

Tobacco cessation training at AIIMS Bhubaneswar

A 3-day training on tobacco cessation was organised at AIIMS Bhubaneswar from March 26-28. Medical officers from 24 districts in Odisha participated in the training that was organised by NTCP Odisha in collaboration with AIIMS Bhubaneswar and School of Public Health, PGIMER Chandigarh.



Strengthening of institutional mechanism at district level in state of Telangana

The State Tobacco Cell-Telangana issued a letter to all districts, asking them to constitute the District Level Coordination Committee as per the requisite structure. It also sought stakeholders' details from all districts within a month.

Telangana colleges directed to ensure tobacco-free campuses

Director of Medical Education, Telangana, Dr Ramesh Reddy has instructed all government medical colleges and other educational institutions in the state to take adequate steps to ensure tobacco-free campuses. Dr Reddy issued a letter in this regard to the colleges.

ICMR-NIN declares itself tobacco free

ICMR-National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad declared its campus tobacco free in March. This declaration from ICMR-NIN came days after School of Public Health, PGIMER Chandigarh wrote to the institute, enquiring about the measures adopted to make the campus tobacco free.

No smoking hoardings at Telangana bus stations

Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) announced to install 'No Smoking' hoardings at every bus station to enable tobacco free environs.

Meghalaya's Police & Municipal Officers can challan for breaching COTPA

The Meghalaya Government has authorised police personnel (not below the rank of Head Constable) and Municipal Officers to issue challans for violation of COTPA. A notification in this regard was issued by the government on January 22.

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death globally. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), tobacco kills more than 7 million people annually. The strategy to counter the tobacco epidemic is laid out in the WHO Framework on Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC).

According to WHO, the common tactics used by tobacco industries to thwart the tobacco control measures are:

Interference strategies directly covered under Article 5.3

Government Partnerships

The tobacco industry partners with various branches of government to influence the tobacco control agenda.

Corporate Social Responsibility

The industry funds Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities to promote a positive image.

Front Groups

The tobacco industry has been using front groups/third parties to weaken the health policy.

Conflicts of Interest Arising from State-ownership of Tobacco Industry

State-ownership of the tobacco industry may pose challenges for the implementation of Article 5.3 in countries where there is a conflict of interest between a government's economic interests in the industry and its responsibility to protect public health.

Interference strategies not directly covered under Article 5.3

Trade and Investment Agreements

The tobacco industry has started to use trade and investment agreements, including those overseen by the World Trade Organization (WTO), to support legal challenges against existing tobacco control policies and prevent the implementation of new policies.

Litigation

Legal challenges have been used by the tobacco industry in order to block legislative and regulatory tobacco control efforts worldwide.

Recommendations

In India, the present tobacco control law does not have regulations to prevent any association with organisations backed by tobacco industry. This necessitates the use of 'shared strategies' to counter tobacco industry by providing opportunities to tobacco control communities to be able to predict and monitor the nature of interferences, expose those identified and thereby implement institutional counter mechanisms.

Article 5.3 of FCTC

Parties to the Convention should refuse to:

- ◆ Treat tobacco corporations as "stakeholders" in public health policy
- ◆ Invest in the tobacco industry
- ◆ Partner with tobacco corporations to promote public health or other purposes
- ◆ Accept the tobacco industry's so-called corporate social responsibility schemes which are really just marketing by another name

Experts Speak



I am glad that several states in India have adopted a policy in line with the FCTC article 5.3. I wish more states will follow this step. Better implementation of these policies would go a long way in enhancing the impact of all the known tobacco control strategies in India.

Dr. Upendra Bhojani

Faculty & Wellcome Trust/DBT India Alliance Fellow,
Institute of Public Health, Bengaluru (India)



Tobacco industry will keep doing all possible manipulations and interference in public health to carry on their business. Tobacco control advocates and law implementers need to tackle each case of industry interference by monitoring the tobacco industry to anticipate challenges-tactics, CSR, media coverage, publications & front groups and further expose the myths and refute industry arguments. It is a right time for national and state government to ensure implementation of Article 5.3 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

Bhavna B Mukhopadhyay

Chief Executive,
Voluntary Health Association of India



Tobacco Industry has been systematically interfering with tobacco control efforts through various tactics. At times it also mischievously extends support to governments for tobacco control or other development works.

Therefore, it is important that government decides, in principle and by legislation, not to interact and collaborate with tobacco industry in anyway.

Mr. Ashish Pandey

Senior Technical Advisor International Union against
Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union)

Global cigarette sales stood at \$700 billion: WHO



A whopping \$700 billion was spent by smokers on cigarettes globally in 2017. The figure on global cigarette sales has come

from the World Health Organisation (WHO). Significantly, the amount is 250 times more than what the international organisation needs to protect human health. "This is what people spend every year on health-destroying products. It's like paying to die and is 250 times more than what World Health Organisation (WHO) needs to protect and promote the most precious commodity on earth – human health," WHO said in a Twitter post on tobacco abuse worldwide, in April.

Only 41 countries mandate pictorial warnings on smokeless tobacco products

Of the 180 parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, 138 countries define smokeless tobacco in their statutes, 34 reported levying a tax on them, six countries check and regulate the content and merely 41 countries mandate pictorial health warnings on them, according to a recent study published in the Lancet Oncology journal.

Doctors unite against ENDS, write to PM

More than 1,000 doctors from 24 states and 3 union territories have united against the sale of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS). These doctors have written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, urging him to enforce a ban on ENDS, including e-cigarettes and flavoured hookah, before it becomes an "epidemic in India". This comes as a follow-up of 'Chandigarh Declaration against ENDS' which was pledged by renowned experts from different medical disciplines in February 2019. In August last year, the Health Ministry had issued an advisory to all states and UTs to stop the manufacture, sale and import of ENDS.

SAVE THE DATE

**5th National Conference
on Tobacco or Health**

September 25th -27th 2020

School of Public Health, PGIMER, Chandigarh

Send us your feedback, comments, and suggestions at
rctcupdates@gmail.com, sphpc.tobacco@gmail.com

Tobacco-free polling booths



After Delhi, Bihar has become the second state to declare all polling booths for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections in the state tobacco free. Subsequently, the states of Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand, Punjab issued similar notifications directing district election officers and district magistrates to put up sign boards of tobacco-free premises at every polling booth. Indian Medical Association has also approached Chief Election Commissioner of India to ensure tobacco-free zones around polling booths across country.

CBSE students may get a chapter on tobacco control

Delhi government mooted a proposal to the President of India for incorporating tobacco control as part of class VI to XII curriculum of CBSE students. The proposal has been forwarded to the concerned departments for detailed consultation.

Tobacco companies targeting school goers in Guwahati: Study

Tobacco companies are targeting students as young as eight years old by selling tobacco products to minors and placing tobacco advertisements near schools premises, according to a "Big Tobacco Tiny Targets" report released from Guwahati.

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