



TOBACCO-FREE TIMES

www.rctcpgi.org



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E-RCTC: Enabling Tobacco-Free Landscape

Looking for a one-stop-solution for tobacco control updates and technical resources? It's just a click away. The E-Resource Centre for Tobacco Control (E-RCTC), an initiative by Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education & Research (PGIMER) Chandigarh, in collaboration with The Union, is emerging as a one-point reference system for varied tobacco control information and activities.

The link to the E-RCTC is <https://rctcpgi.org/> "The E-RCTC intends to catalyse tobacco control activities in the country. It will help foster tobacco control partnerships," says Dr Sonu Goel,



Delegates at the round-table meeting on the formation of E-RCTC

Additional Professor, School of Public Health, PGIMER Chandigarh. The E-RCTC will go a long way in strengthening the National Tobacco Control Programme, he asserts. The portal is in public domain and over 12,000 visitors across 50 countries have visited it.

One-stop solution

The virtual centre will help in providing all relevant information related to tobacco control under one roof. It will also regularly update the evidences and facts which will solve the current issues of information-gap and facilitate programme managers academicians, researchers and other stakeholders in seeking correct, reliable, updated and contextual data and statistics in tobacco control.

"It will facilitate coordination and collaboration between tobacco control organisations and strengthen tobacco control partnerships" said

Smt. Preeti Sudan, Union Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, during Roundtable Consultation of Coalition Partners for Development of Resource Centre for Tobacco Control.



Why E-RCTC?



Experts at Bali where E-RCTC was launched on September 14, 2018

Presently, there's no platform in India from where we can fetch all the information related to tobacco control activities. The existing information on tobacco control, though highly valuable, is lying scattered at different sources. This information needs to be channelised and arranged in a systematic manner at a particular place.

In addition to this, there are a number of orders and notifications that need to be organised at different administrative levels. This move will greatly help all the stakeholders to facilitate tobacco control initiatives in their respective states.

The E-RCTC would also help counter the misleading facts on tobacco control which exist on various web engines.

The e-platform will also be used by budding aspirants (researchers and academicians) who do not find a stage to orient themselves in tobacco control.

Experts Speak



All our implementers, academicians and stakeholders will have access to relevant information through the E-RCTC that serves as a one-point reference centre

Dr Rana J Singh, Deputy Regional Director, International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease

This is one of the best compilations of tobacco control resources in the country presently available to anybody, including students, advocates and researchers



Dr Rakesh Gupta, Deputy Director, Department of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of Punjab



It's a unique initiative that will immensely help the people implementing tobacco control programme at the grassroots level

Mr. Deepak Mishra, Executive Director, SEEDS

The E-RCTC will play a pivotal role in capacity building that will facilitate better implementation of tobacco control initiatives

Dr Amit Yadav, Senior Consultant, National Institute of Cancer Prevention And Research



It will help in the implementation of tobacco control laws and programmes

Dr Gopal Chauhan, State Nodal Officer, NTCP, Himachal Pradesh

The road to E-RCTC

Need Assessment

Draft framework developed on the basis of inputs by project partners, staff and resource persons who attended an induction training at PGIMER Chandigarh.

Draft framework screened by experts on tobacco control; experts' suggestions incorporated into the draft.

Mapping

Mapping of potential partners and stakeholders was conducted at national and sub-national levels. As many 25 high-level personnel from varied organisations agreed to support E-RCTC.

Stakeholders' Meeting

At a high-level round-table meeting chaired by Union Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare Smt Preeti Sudan, the draft framework discussed and finalised.

Organisations like WHO-SEARO, The Union, CTFK, Vital Strategies, VHAI, MANT, Public Health Foundation of India, Sambandh Health Foundation, AIIMS Delhi, JIPMER Puducherry, MAMC, Vardhman Mahavir Medical College, IHMR, NICPR etc participated. Officials from health departments of Punjab and Delhi were also part of the discussion

Sourcing of materials for E-RCTC

Stakeholders and coalition partners invited to submit a brief update on specialised topics.

Launch of E-RCTC

E-Resource Centre (www.rctcpgi.org) launched at the 12th Asia Pacific Conference on 14 September, in Bali, Indonesia. Dr P.C. Gupta, Director, Healis Institute for Public Health; Dr Tara Singh Bam, Deputy Regional Director-Asia Pacific Region, The Union; Dr Jagdish Kaur, Regional Adviser (TFI) -WHO SEARO; Dr Mira B Aghi, Behavioural Scientist and Communication Expert and others were present on the occasion.

Project Update...

Workshops

- A high-level sensitisation workshop to strengthen National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP) was organised in Meghalaya, on 28 Jan 2019. Chief guest Shri Pravin Bakshi, Health Secretary, Government of Meghalaya, released a baseline assessment report on the compliance to tobacco control in two project districts-East and West Khasi Hills.



NEIGRIHMS, Shillong, Meghalaya

- Around 100 programme implementers (district nodal officers and consultants) and state officials participated in a workshop to improve impact of tobacco control initiatives under National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP) organised at AIIMS, Bhubaneswar, on 30 Jan 2019.



AIIMS, Bhubaneswar, Odisha

- Puducherry witnessed a high-level sensitisation workshop aimed at strengthening the National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP) on 26th February 2019. Chief guest Dr K.V. Raman, Director-Department of Health & Family Welfare, Government of Puducherry, released the report on "Compliance to COTPA in Puducherry" at the workshop that was attended by 50 participants.



JIPMER, Puducherry

District Level Coordination Committee

- As part of strengthening NTCP in Telangana through formation of District Level Coordination Committee (DLCC) in each district, the project team succeeded to form a DLCC in Ranga Reddy district, after the approval of the District Collector.

100 meetings

- In a bid to advance National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP) in the four project states/Union Territories (Meghalaya, Odisha, Telangana and Puducherry), more than 100 meetings held with high-level government officials between Feb 2018-Feb 2019.

End of ENDS seems imminent

Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems, often referred to as ENDS, may be marketed as “safe alternatives” to cigarettes. But, that’s not the reality. ENDS contain toxic chemicals that are linked to cancer, nervous system damage and others serious health problems. The Union Government has even issued a advisory that underlines the severe health implications associated with ENDS. It has also asked all States and Union Territories to take adequate measures to prohibit the sale, manufacture, distribution, import, trade and advertisement of ENDS.

The Misconception ENDS

ENDS, of which electronic cigarettes are the most common prototype, are devices that do not burn or use tobacco leaves but instead vapourise a solution the user then inhales, according to WHO. Generally, in ENDS, instead of tobacco, nicotine is used in its chemical form. So, its users are under the impression that they are not consuming tobacco and are ‘distancing themselves’ from smoking. But the fact remains that such people are actually having nicotine, the highly addictive component of tobacco.



“In the backdrop of recent studies and researches, we by no means can term ENDS as harmless. There is no concrete evidence that ENDS lead to tobacco cessation,” says Dr Sonu Goel, Principal Investigator, E-Resource Centre for Tobacco Control-a joint initiative of PGIMER Chandigarh and The Union.

Referring to the advisory issued by the Govt. of India, ***Dr Goel adds, “The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare’s August, 2018 advisory and the public health concerns raised in Surgeon General report December 2016 are a testimony to the fact that the ill-effects of ENDS and similar products far outweigh their benefits.”***

Studies point out that nicotine can have adverse effects in the development of

foetus during pregnancy. It may contribute to cardio-vascular disease and may function as a tumour promoter. Foetal and nicotine exposure may have long-term consequences for brain development, potentially leading to learning and anxiety disorders. In addition to nicotine, ENDS may contain propylene glycol, with or without glycerol and flavouring agents. Metals like lead, chromium and nickel have also been found in aerosol of some ENDS. Presence of harmful chemicals like formaldehyde has also been recorded in the aerosol. There have been cases when in ENDS the concentration of all these have been found higher than or equal to that of in the traditional cigarettes.

Experts Speak



“ENDS do not signify the end of tobacco problem, rather it denotes the beginning of a new problem. Although deliberately mislabelled by the Industry as e-cigarette, it has nothing to do with the cigarette. To mislead, it has the same tubular structure as cigarette and a red light lights up when the tube is sucked completing deception. It is simply a delivery device containing highly toxic and addictive chemical, nicotine, and needs to be regulated.”

Dr Prakash C. Gupta,
Director, Healis-Sekhsaria Institute of Public Health
Navi Mumbai



“ENDS is a product from a devil we know. All current claims on health, safety and effect are unproven and specious. Vaping associations and companies currently depend on a threadbare argument and use the Public Health England (PHE) Report. PHE must revisit its position, based on growing evidence that ENDS and other new technologies will do more harm than good. ENDS is another ploy by the tobacco industry to deepen the nicotine addiction globally. India has shown leadership in tobacco control in the region and needs to lead by banning its trade and use in India.”

Pranay Lal
Senior Technical Advisor
International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease



“In the backdrop of recent studies and researches, we by no means can term ENDS as harmless. There is no concrete evidence that ENDS lead to tobacco cessation.”

Dr Sonu Goel
Additional Professor
School of Public Health, PGIMER Chandigarh



“India has been a global leader in tobacco control and continues to remain committed as seen in the recent advisory issued against Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems. Public health community in India applauded this step taken by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, as this advisory will go a long way in protecting the youth of India from the threats posed by these new emerging tobacco products. A country with 358 million young people cannot afford to introduce these new addictions if it has to take advantage of this demographic dividend. It is the policies of today that will define the future health of our youth. The Government of India is taking steps in the right direction to provide a protective and enabling environment to the youth of this country.”

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Dr Monika Arora,
Director: Health Promotion Division
Public Health Foundation of India



While we know that there are carcinogenic elements and chemicals in cigarette, there is no clear data available on e-cigarette. Literature globally has cited that e-cigarette is causing cardiovascular, respiratory and many other diseases. Also, it is being seen that teenagers, who have not smoked before, are using e-cigarette as a trendy thing moreover, manufacturers are tended to disguise e-cigarette with flavours of black currant or cappuccino but youngsters are not aware of this. There is also evidence that it could be a gateway to starting tobacco smoking.

Dr Sandeep Gupta
Consultant Cardiologist, London

National conference voices for tobacco-free generation

SAVE THE DATE
5th National Conference on Tobacco or Health
September 25th -27th 2020
School of Public Health, PGIMER, Chandigarh

The 4th National Conference on Tobacco or Health was held in Mumbai from February 8-10, 2019.

The best practices and recent developments in tobacco control, along with ongoing efforts of various stakeholders in India, took centre stage at the conference. Emerging topics that have gained prominence in recent years like environmental effects of tobacco, divestment from the tobacco industry, productivity losses, new emerging



Delegates at 4th National Conference on Tobacco or Health, Mumbai

tobacco/nicotine et al were also discussed during the two-day conference.

There was also sharing of experiences and achievements by the participants.

PGIMER Chandigarh's signature campaign reaches Mumbai



Signature campaign against ENDS in Mumbai

A signature campaign spearheaded by PGIMER Chandigarh against ENDS found more supporters at the 4th National Conference on Tobacco or Health.

Coming out in support of the signature campaign, doctors, public health professionals, research scholars, development practitioners, programme implementers and other participants at the conference pledged to sensitise people about the ill-effects of ENDS and also to boycott agencies and foundations linked with the tobacco industry, directly or indirectly.

Initiated in February 2019, the campaign has already united people from all walks of life in Punjab. Corporate houses, State Cyber Crime Cell Punjab, members of civil society, FDA officials Punjab, IMA Mohali and Chandigarh and IDA Chandigarh had joined the drive that started on February 2, 2019, at PGIMER, Chandigarh.

"We are noting with profound concern that increasing availability and use of ENDS in India is skyrocketing and exposing children and adults to a lifetime of nicotine addiction and associated health risks.

"We support the Ministry's advisory and its position that the existing evidence is inadequate and limited to support the use of new technologies (ENDS and the like) for cessation or for harms reduction," read the Chandigarh declaration on E-Cigarettes that was signed by the participants of the 4th National Conference on Tobacco or Health.

Govts' Act

The Union Ministry for Health & Family Welfare, in its advisory issued on 28 August 2018, asked the states and union territories to take necessary action to prohibit ENDS. Extracts from the advisory are below:

- ENDS users get exposed to chemicals like nitrosamines, benzene, ethylene oxide and acrylamide etc. linked to cancer and/or nervous system damage, among other health effects.
- Nicotine is prohibited as an ingredient in any food item under the Food Safety and Standards Regulation.
- The scientific evidence regarding the effectiveness of ENDS as a cessation aid is scant and of low certainty, making it difficult to draw credible inferences. ENDS are not yet approved as NRT (Nicotine Replacement Therapy) under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.

Punjab takes the lead, 11 states/UTs follow suit

Punjab became the first state in the country to ban E-cigarettes/ENDS (Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems) under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act 1940.

MOHFW issued an advisory to states/UTs to act against ENDS under Drugs and Cosmetics Act on 28th August 2018.

The advisory by the Government of India has opened the way for states and UTs to prevent ENDS becoming an additional marketing strategy for tobacco companies.

A total of 12 states/UTs - Punjab, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Mizoram, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand and Puducherry - have declared ENDS as unapproved under drugs and cosmetics Act so far.

While every care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the content in this newsletter, PGIMER Chandigarh will not be responsible or liable for any errors or omissions.