

Smokers Need Help: Should Poison Centres Offer Help For Smokers To Quit Smoking?

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Introduction : Tobacco is the single largest preventable cause of death and disease in the world today. In Malaysia, it accounts for about 10,000 deaths annually. According to WHO, many smokers are fully aware of the health implications of smoking, and most of them want to quit but find it difficult to stop due to the addictive nature of nicotine.

Objective : The purpose of this study is to determine the extent by which Malaysian smokers have quit intentions and to determine the nature of assistance and treatment they have sought in their previous quitting attempts. **Method** : A cross-sectional study using a multi-stage sampling design was conducted in 6 out of 13 states in Malaysia using self-administered questionnaires. Study population was 2000 adult smokers aged 18 and above. **Results** : In this study, it was found that 54.9% of the smokers said that they have quit intentions and 61.3% of them had tried quitting before but failed to do so. When asked about the kind of assistance they have sought in their quitting attempts, 85.5% said they never received any quitting information from clinics, 75% had never heard of quitting medicines before, and nearly 28 % said that they were not at all confident to quit successfully. **Conclusion** : This study clearly demonstrates the need for providing support to smokers to quit in order to protect their health and lives. Poison centres with the available infrastructure and resources are actually in a unique position to offer some assistance, working in partnership with other relevant agencies. Thus, we feel that there is a need for poison centres to consider their role to provide support for smokers to quit smoking. The kind of support and activities that poison centre can contribute will be discussed in the paper.