



Global Health Bytes webinar

Wednesday 19 August 2020, 4.00-4.30 pm NZ time

Dunedin: Room AVC2, Disability Information & Support, Student Learning Centre Offices
(Central Library/Information Services Building), Albany Street

Remote participation by Zoom:

<https://otago.zoom.us/j/486443663?pwd=WGgyUkEyQm13djIPRDRhWFVmWUZZUT09</h4>>

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Smokeless tobacco and areca nut control – integral part of Covid-19 management strategy

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In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, several research outputs aimed at curtailing it are building rapidly. In similar lines, there is growing literature on association of tobacco with Covid-19 infection. Evidence-based studies that show increased susceptibility of tobacco consumers compared with non-consumers, are limited to smoking. World Health Organisation, in its statement elucidates that the immunosuppression caused by nicotine, and smoking associated co-morbidities accentuate infection susceptibility. Such co-morbidities are associated with use of smokeless tobacco as well. Globally there are 303 million smokeless tobacco consumers, 91% of these consumers are located in Southeast Asian and some pacific island countries. Areca nut chewing is also an endemic cultural practice in these countries. Both practices elevate the risk of ongoing pandemic because, in addition to the indirect effects of nicotine in enhancing the susceptibility to Covid-19 infection, smokeless tobacco and areca nut impose additional direct risks. Firstly, the act of using these substances leads to frequent hand to mouth contact and secondly, chewing these substances produces copious amount of saliva that needs to be spit sporadically. As these practices are culturally ingrained and socially acceptable, spitting in public is not viewed with stigma nor people have inhibitions to spit in public places. Thus spitting in public places is a common sight in these countries. With these actions in the use of smokeless tobacco and areca nut the recommended hygiene measures are compromised and it is logical that it, increases susceptibility to infection and exacerbates transmission of the infection among the public.

In spite of the potential threat posed by smokeless tobacco and areca nut, the emphasis is on smoking cessation only. Smokeless tobacco and areca nut practices may or may not be a universal problem, but in Southeast Asian and some pacific island countries, it certainly poses a greater public health threat, actions towards cessation are imminent. Moreover, most of the countries under these regions belong to low-middle-income category that have an inherently poor healthcare infrastructure, and may pose difficulties to handle the burgeoning number of cases. In view of these facts, it is important to enhance public awareness and undertake measures to curtail smokeless tobacco and areca nut use as integral part of Covid-19 management strategy. This presentation focusses on the steps for control of smokeless tobacco and areca nut as a COVID-19 management strategy, with India as a model for discussion.

Instructions for attendees

You will need Internet access as well as speakers on your computer. Each Global Health Bytes webinar will be approximately ½ hour in duration.

1. To join a webinar:

Click on the Zoom link from from PC, Mac, iOS or Android:

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Password: 303183

The guest speaker will present their talk, and you will be able to ask questions using the *Chat* function in Zoom. The speaker will respond to questions either verbally, or using Chat. *Please note - this is a webinar and you will not be able to turn your video or microphone on, you are welcome to send questions and chat messages instead.*

2. Using the Chat

1. Attendees will ask questions using the Chat function. In your controls at the bottom window, click **Chat**.

The *Chat* window will open on the right side of your screen if you are not in full screen mode. If you are full screen mode, it will open in a window that you can move around your screen. *Chat* will be in the controls at the bottom of your screen.

3. Type your message and press **Enter** to send it.
4. You can also select who you would like to send the message to by clicking on the drop down next to **To**:
 - When you receive a *Chat* message, you will receive a notification at the bottom of your screen if you do not currently have the Chat window open.

The meeting will be recorded and available through OGHI (web and Facebook links will be posted). It will be part of an archive of meetings which can be accessed via the web. By participating in the *OGHI Global Health Bytes*, you agree to the webinar being recorded and available online.

For any questions or help with Zoom, please contact eConferencing on econferencing@otago.ac.nz or call +64 3 479 8440 during normal work hours (8:30am – 5:00pm NZ time)