

Women experiencing early-life physical or sexual abuse have excess early mortality

Childhood or adolescent physical and sexual abuse has been found to have long term negative effects on health and mortality in adulthood. A recent study published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) examined data from 68,000 women who participated in the US Nurses Health Study. The researchers focused on the role of mental health conditions and lifestyle patterns in mediating the associations between early-life abuse and adverse health outcomes.

The study revealed that approximately half of

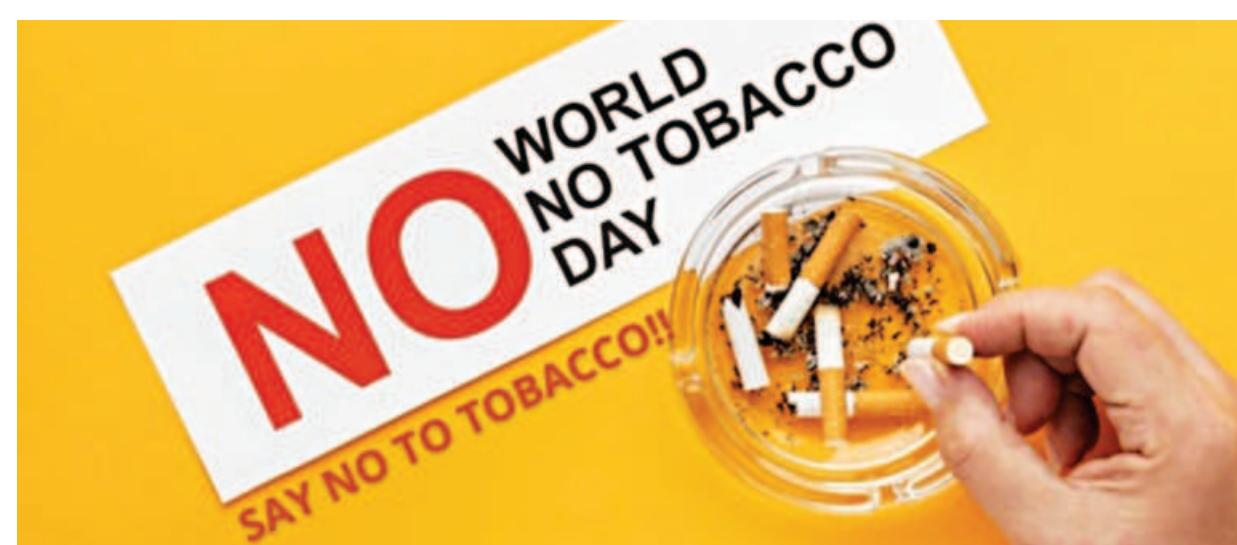


the nurses reported experiencing physical abuse during their childhood or adolescence, and about one third reported sexual abuse. The analyses showed significant associations between early-life abuse and premature death before the age of 70, particularly due to injuries, poisoning, or suicide, as well as respiratory, cardiovascular, or gastrointestinal diseases.

Further examination of the data revealed that these associations were influenced, to varying degrees, by factors such as depression, anxiety, smoking, and sedentary lifestyles. However, diet and obesity did not appear to play a significant role in mediating these associations.

The findings highlight the importance of preventing child abuse and its long-term impact on women's health and longevity. It suggests that trauma-informed counselling and support services specifically designed for individuals who have experienced childhood abuse may help mitigate the adverse effects. These services should be provided by therapists and teams who have the necessary training and experience in addressing the unique needs of survivors of childhood abuse.

Overall, the study underscores the need for increased awareness, prevention, and support systems to address the long-lasting effects of childhood abuse on individuals' health and well-being. By addressing emotional conditions and modifying behavioural risk factors, we can potentially improve the long-term health outcomes for survivors of childhood abuse.



Urge to governments to stop subsidising life-threatening tobacco crops

STAR HEALTH REPORT

On World No Tobacco Day (31st May), the World Health Organisation (WHO) calls upon governments worldwide to end subsidies for tobacco farming and instead support the cultivation of sustainable crops that can alleviate hunger and food insecurity for millions of people.

With tobacco responsible for 8 million deaths annually, it is alarming that governments continue to invest millions of dollars into supporting tobacco farms. Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of WHO, emphasises the urgent need for a shift in priorities, stating, "By choosing to grow food instead of tobacco, we prioritise health, preserve ecosystems, and strengthen food security for all."

The current global scenario sees over 300 million individuals grappling with acute food insecurity, while more than 3 million hectares of land in over 120 countries are dedicated to the cultivation of deadly tobacco. This persists even in regions where communities suffer from starvation.

In a recently published report titled "Grow food, not tobacco," WHO sheds light on the detrimental

consequences of tobacco cultivation and underscores the benefits of transitioning to sustainable food crops. The report also exposes the tobacco industry's exploitation of farmers, ensnaring them in a cycle of debt while promoting tobacco farming through exaggerated economic benefits and lobbying via farming front groups.

Tobacco farming inflicts severe health issues on farmers themselves, as they are exposed to chemical pesticides, tobacco smoke, and the equivalent of nicotine found in 50 cigarettes. This prolonged exposure leads to chronic lung conditions, nicotine poisoning, and other illnesses. Shockingly, more than 1 million child laborers are estimated to work on tobacco farms, depriving them of education and subjecting them to hazardous conditions.

To combat the tobacco farming crisis, WHO, along with the Food and Agriculture Organisation and the World Food Programme, supports the Tobacco Free Farms initiative.

Each year, World No Tobacco Day acknowledges individuals and organisations making significant contributions to tobacco control. This year's recognition includes Ms

Sprina Robi Chacha, a female farmer from Kenya. Her commendation stems from successfully shifting from tobacco cultivation to growing high-protein beans and training hundreds of fellow farmers to adopt healthier practices, fostering a more robust and healthier community.

With 182 Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control committing to promoting economically viable alternatives for tobacco workers and growers, it is crucial for governments to end tobacco farming subsidies and provide support for healthier crop alternatives. Such measures will address poverty, improve health outcomes, and reduce the burden on healthcare systems. In conclusion, by prioritising sustainable food crops over tobacco farming, governments can safeguard public health, protect ecosystems, and enhance food security.

It is imperative to break free from the grip of the tobacco industry, whose practices perpetuate illness, poverty, and death. The transition to sustainable agriculture not only benefits individuals and communities but also contributes to a healthier and more sustainable world for all.

Tobacco harm reduction framework necessary to achieve PM's smoke-free vision by 2040

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Health experts and policymakers gathered at the Bangladesh THR Summit 2023 on May 27, 2023, to discuss the role of Tobacco Harm Reduction (THR) in achieving a 'Smoke-free Bangladesh' by 2040. THR is a public health strategy aimed at minimising the health risks associated with conventional tobacco products. The experts emphasised the need to regulate less harmful alternatives of nicotine delivery while imposing stricter restrictions on traditional cigarettes.

Notable public health experts, including Dr Derek Yach, former World Health Organisation (WHO) Cabinet Director, highlighted the importance of harm reduction strategies in tobacco control. Dr Yach stated that harm reduction has always been part of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) but has not been fully implemented. He emphasised that Bangladesh has the opportunity to save lives by integrating harm reduction policies into its economic transformation.

Dr Delon Human, a former secretary general of the World Medical Association, expressed concerns about the current approach to tobacco control, stating that it offers little hope for achieving a smoke-free world by 2040. He stressed the



importance of integrating harm reduction policies, science, and regulated products into tobacco control to provide hope for the almost 1.4 billion smokers worldwide, including 20 million in Bangladesh.

Dr Konstantinos Farsalinos, a Greek cardiologist and a leading THR researcher, presented evidence indicating that smoke-free nicotine alternatives, such as vaping products, are at least 95% less harmful than cigarettes. He emphasised that these alternatives are preferred by most smokers for quitting and should be made available in Bangladesh under regulated frameworks.

Dr Kgosi Letlape, former president of the World Medical Association, emphasised the importance of ensuring access to harm reduction tools as basic human rights. He highlighted the role of health professionals in providing accurate health information and risk communication to empower

consumers.

The experts believe that Bangladesh, with its resilience and immense potential, can become a global role model by implementing a practical THR framework. They see the vision of a Smoke-Free Bangladesh by 2040 set by the Honourable Prime Minister as achievable through the integration of harm reduction strategies.

In summary, the harm reduction summit in Bangladesh highlighted the urgent need to regulate less harmful nicotine delivery alternatives while imposing stricter restrictions on traditional cigarettes. The experts emphasised the potential of harm reduction strategies in achieving a smoke-free future and saving lives. By integrating harm reduction policies, science, and regulated products, Bangladesh can become a global role model in tobacco control and realise its vision of a Smoke-Free Bangladesh by 2040.

Timing of gestational diabetes screening: is earlier always better?

Gestational diabetes (GD) is a condition that affects pregnant women and can have potential health risks for both the mother and the baby. Currently, there is a debate about when to screen for GD and whether early screening and treatment provide better outcomes.

A recent study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) examined the effectiveness of early screening for GD. The study found that immediate treatment did not significantly improve outcomes such as pregnancy-related hypertension and neonatal



lean body mass.

In another large study, early screening for GD in high-risk women did not lower the incidence of adverse perinatal events. In fact, there were potential net harms identified in women who underwent early screening and had more risk factors.

Based on these findings, the current recommendations for routine screening at 24 to 28 weeks of pregnancy still appear

to offer the best balance of benefits and harms. Early screening and treatment may not necessarily lead to improved outcomes for high-risk women.

Healthy habits start early: national youth wellness festival

ULAB in Dhaka hosted the first Youth Wellness Festival, targeting university students and focusing on mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional health. The event drew 200 students who engaged in a full day of activities exploring healthy living. The festival will continue at other universities in Dhaka in the following weeks.

Several private sector companies showed their commitment to youth wellness by supporting the festival. The Mayor of North Dhaka attended the event and highlighted the significance of inclusivity and the role of yoga and meditation in reducing non-communicable diseases.

The Dhaka Flow platform provides a wellness directory, calendar, and blog to promote a healthy community.

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HAVE A NICE DAY

Duality in human nature

DR RUBAIUL MURSHED

At the end of the 19th century, Scottish author Robert Stevenson wrote a classic story about the two sides of human nature called 'The strange case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde' where he wrote about the duality of human nature. There was a battle between good and evil rages within the individual. He described how there is a good and an evil side to everyone's personality, but what is important is how we behave and the decisions we make. In the field of psychology, the topics of human nature and motivation have been quite extensively discussed. These two topics are interrelated and inseparable.

Any endeavour to understand a person's potential makes it necessary to study human nature. It bears so many mysteries on its own. But after all, maybe this dual nature is what makes the human so special with its autonomy. Proper behaviour is how somebody politely acts. It is a response to things that are happening internally - views and feelings, externally, the surrounding people with the factors such as wrongdoing, racism, and egoism can have a profound impact on physical and mental soundness.

More generally, good manners could be blended with also bad motivations. This can be seen in everyday life, for example, when we meet people who seem to be kind and friendly, whereas, in reality, they could be manipulative or cunning.

Our homes or early shelters and close associates, friends, and parents influence our characters in developing greediness, unkindness, and misbeliefs which are the main sources that give rise to evil deeds. These infiltrate toxic pride in our nature. Here comes the term 'companionship' - which is extremely important for both our mental and physical well-being. Having good company is all that we really need.

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