

SOME FACTS ABOUT TOBACCO ABUSE IN SERBIA AND MEASURES TO CONTROL IT.

Abstract: Health professionals around the world now accept the existence of a global tobacco epidemic and its health consequences. It is estimated that the total number of tobacco users is 1.3 billions and is expected to rise to 1.7 billions by 2025. In Serbia almost a half of men and one third of women are active smokers, and among teenagers 16.3% girls and 12.5% boys by the age of 15 years smoke. Exposed to environmental tobacco smoke in their homes is 65.7% inhabitants of Serbia, and almost every child. At work places, 55.5% of employees are exposed to second hand smoke for more than 1 hour daily.

Smoking is one of the leading individual risks for development of the most common chronic diseases, such as lung cancer, ischaemic heart disease, stroke and chronic obstructive lung disease. Smoking is responsible for 9.8% of all deaths in Serbia in 2000, and for 13.7% of the total years of life lost (18% for men; 7.9% for women). Due to the smoking in Serbia yearly die around 10,200 persons, i.e., 30 daily and more than 1 every hour.

It will take time to alter the perception of the population regarding smoking, as smoking behavior is very much embedded in Serbia and is regarded as socially accepted. Therefore, there is a need for mutisectorial cooperation as an important aspect of the harmonization with the countries of European Union. Ministry of Health and its National Committee for Smoking Prevention have been engaged in implementation of comprehensive measures and actions, as well as on preparation of the Tobacco Control Strategy for the Republic of Serbia and Action plan 2005 – 2010. The overall goal of this Strategy is to provide a framework for the implementation of tobacco control measures to ensure the future health and well-being of the citizens of Serbia and protect them from the harmful effects of smoking and exposure to tobacco smoke. One of the most important steps will be the ratification of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.