

LETTER to the EDITOR

Editorial Process: Submission:01/27/2024 Acceptance:02/16/2024

Transformative Multimedia Messages for Smokeless Tobacco Cessation: Tech-Savvy against Tobacco

Asian Pac J Cancer Prev, 25 (2), 369-369

Dear Editor

We commend the authors [1] for their recent work 'Validation of mobile messages for an mhealth intervention for smokeless tobacco cessation in India.' The work presented is undoubtedly a significant step towards addressing the critical issue of increasing prevalence of smokeless tobacco (SLT) consumption, especially in low- and middle-income countries like India.

The authors innovative approach to utilizing mobile health (mhealth) technology for behaviour modification interventions is inspiring. It is evident that such novel approaches are critical in tackling the ongoing challenges of SLT prevalence, especially among the youth. The study's findings underscore the potential effectiveness of tailored cell phone communications in encouraging tobacco quitting and sustaining such behaviour changes. It is worth noting that use of SLT is the major cause of oral squamous cell carcinoma (OSCC) worldwide, with new research indicating an increase in the number of young patients [2].

In view of the study's findings, we would like to propose additional preventive measures to complement authors' work. Given the ubiquitous usage of smartphones, particularly among the youth, implementing QR codes in public places like bus stops and pan shops could serve as a powerful tool. These QR codes could link to graphical and textual warning messages, providing immediate and accessible information on the risks of consuming SLT and different ways to quit the habit. To improve the efficacy of such preventive measures, it would be prudent to investigate the integration of multimedia messages with other technological advancements like augmented reality or holographic messages. This technique could provide a more engaging and impactful means of delivering warnings and suggesting corrective actions particularly given today's tech-savvy youth.

Language diversity is a crucial factor in a multilingual country like India. Therefore, these warning messages should be published in various languages to enable widespread comprehension and dissemination. This multilingual approach would considerably improve the accessibility and effectiveness of the proposed preventive actions.

The article also rightly emphasises on audio-visual (AV) messaging over simple text, and we completely agree with this viewpoint. Incorporating AV aspects in warning messages has been proven to be more effective

in preventing tobacco habits. Literature suggests that integrating attention grabbing, emotional, pictorial warnings is critical to maximising the impact of warning labels [3]. Therefore, any future initiatives should leverage these insights to develop effective advertisements against tobacco usage.

In conclusion, the authors admirable efforts should act as a spur for more comprehensible programmes to combat SLT usage. The combination of technological advancements and a multilingual approach, along with the proposed QR codes in public places, might considerably improve the success of such initiatives.

References

1. Lahoti S, Panda R, Prabhu RR, Das S, Patro SK, Nazareth I. Validation of mobile messages for an mhealth intervention for smokeless tobacco cessation in india. *Asian Pac J Cancer Prev*. 2023;24(12):4011-5. <https://doi.org/10.31557/apjcp.2023.24.12.4011>.
2. Anand R, Sarode GP, Sengupta N, Sarode SC. Mitigating smokeless tobacco use among school going adolescents: An urgent call for intervention. *Asian Pac J Cancer Prev*. 2023;24(10):3307. <https://doi.org/10.31557/apjcp.2023.24.10.3307>.
3. Jebai R, Asfar T, Cano MA, Nakkash R, Schmidt M, Wu W, et al. Effects of pictorial health warning labels on intention to quit waterpipe in lebanon: A mediation analysis. *Nicotine Tob Res*. 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ntr/ntad223>.

Rahul Anand*, Gargi Sarode, Namrata Sengupta, Sachin Sarode

*Department of Oral Pathology and Microbiology, Dr DY Patil Dental College and Hospital, Dr DY Patil Vidyapeeth, Pune, India. *For Correspondence: rahul.anand303@gmail.com*