

Interagency Committee on Smoking and Health
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“Addressing the Global Tobacco Epidemic”
Country Presentations — Presentation Notes

Mostafa K. Mohamed, MD, PhD, Professor of Community Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, Ain Shams University, Abbasyia, Cairo, Egypt

Dr. Mohamed began his talk by outlining the reasons why global tobacco control is such a challenge, including tobacco industry marketing practices, as well as insufficient capacity in many countries to meet the challenges. One of the solutions offered by Dr. Mohamed is through Global Network International Centers for tobacco control research and prevention. One such center is located in Egypt – “Egypt Smoking Prevention Research Institute” (ESPRI).

Dr. Mohamed described the burden of tobacco use in Egypt, with the average age of initiation decreasing to approximately 11 years old. Water-pipe smoking has a long history in the region and is an important smoking pattern with special characteristics that need to be studied. Evidence suggests that there are 23,000 deaths annually attributed to cigarette smoking and there is additional evidence of large smoking effects on tuberculosis mortality. As is the case in developed countries, the burden of disease is increasingly represented by chronic, non-communicable conditions caused by risk behavior such as tobacco use.

Egypt has already enacted many of the FCTC requirements, and Dr. Mohamed provided some of his thoughts about the role of the ESPRI in conducting and evaluating research for FCTC ratification and implementation of the treaty. Because compliance is a serious challenge, Dr. Mohamed talked about some of the research being conducted to address this challenge.

Religious influence has been used successfully as a public health “tool” in Egypt and the region has been working with leaders of Christian churches and Islamic institutions to endorse and support tobacco control through religious messages since the 1980s. ESPRI continues to work with religious leaders to train them on tobacco control-related health issues so that this information can be disseminated throughout communities. In addition to working with the religious community, ESPRI also works with universities to develop curricula at medical schools and also works toward smoke-free campuses.

In closing, Dr. Mohamed talked briefly about future directions for ESPRI, including involving more partners, working with other regions, and developing population specific messages.