

Harmful effects of shisha discussed at WCM-Q's Grand Rounds

Doha – May 16, 2016: The harmful effects of smoking shisha were discussed by an expert in tobacco research and nicotine dependence at the latest installment of Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar's (WCM-Q) Grand Rounds.

Professor Thomas Eissenberg, Director of the Center for the Study of Tobacco Products at Virginia Commonwealth University in the United States, said research shows that tobacco smoke from shisha contains many of the same poisons and can cause addiction in the same way as the smoke from cigarettes.

Speaking at WCM-Q to an audience of physicians, researchers, students and healthcare professionals, Prof. Eissenberg said: "Nicotine dependence is indicated by compulsion to use, impaired ability to quit and preoccupation with use, and research has shown that at least some waterpipe smokers meet these criteria.

"We should care about that dependence because this form of tobacco use is associated with substantial user toxicant exposure as well as disease burden."

Smoking shisha or narghila has experienced huge growth in popularity in the Middle East, the US and Europe in recent years, particularly among young people. Many people mistakenly believe that shisha is not as harmful or addictive as smoking cigarettes. In fact, shisha can actually be more harmful because of the way it is smoked, explained Prof. Eissenberg.

"With a waterpipe, because the water cools the smoke and the draw resistance of the pipe is so low, it's very easy to inhale a lot of smoke – up to 50 liters of smoke over a 45-minute use period, compared to around one liter of smoke that is consumed by someone smoking a cigarette over about five minutes. It's important to know that the water only cools the smoke, it doesn't filter out toxicants."

In fact, chemical analysis of waterpipe and cigarette smoke conducted in the laboratory by Prof. Eissenberg found that the smoke from a 45-minute shisha session exposed a smoker to 1.7 times the amount of nicotine, and contained 8.4 times the amount of harmful carbon monoxide and a massive 36 times the amount of tar, as the smoke from one cigarette over a 5-minute period.

Just like cigarette smokers, shisha smokers put themselves at greater risk of diseases like bronchitis, emphysema, periodontal disease and lung cancer. Expectant mothers who smoke shisha while pregnant can give birth to children with low birth weight.

Calling for more research into the effects of waterpipe smoking and more work to raise awareness of its dangers, Prof. Eissenberg added: "Why should we care about waterpipe smoking? Because our youth are getting addicted to it, and it's killing them."



Dr. Thurayya Arayssi, Associate Dean for Continuing Professional Development said: “We are very grateful to Professor Eissenberg for speaking at Grand Rounds about this important and pressing issue. It is very good for the healthcare community in Qatar to be able to benefit from his expertise in this field and to carry his message about the health risks associated with smoking all types of tobacco products to the public.”

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Picture caption 1:

Professor Thomas Eissenberg, an expert on the harmful effects of tobacco products, visited Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar from the US to speak about the health dangers of smoking shisha.

About Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar

Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar is a partnership between Cornell University and Qatar Foundation. It offers a comprehensive six-year medical program leading to the Cornell University M.D. degree with teaching by Cornell and Weill Cornell faculty and by physicians at Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) and Aspetar Orthopedic and Sports Medicine Hospital who hold Weill Cornell appointments. Through its biomedical research program, WCM-Q is building a sustainable research community in Qatar while advancing basic science and clinical research. Through its medical college, WCM-Q seeks to provide the finest education possible for medical students, to improve health care both now and for future generations, and to provide high quality health care to the Qatari population.

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