



What's New:

- Dr. Kenneth Ward presented a talk about the experience of SCTS as part of a session on “Science in the Arab World: Status, Institutions and Developing Relationships”, which will be held during American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) annual meeting (Washington, DC, February 17-21,2005).
- Syrian Center for Tobacco Studies (SCTS) wins a grant from the “Initiative for Cardiovascular Health Research in Developing Countries” (IC health) to prepare a full application about the development of waterpipe cessation intervention.
- SCTS team participates in Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco (SRNT) conference, Prague 20-23/3/2005; with several presentations (oral and posters). The participated researches are Drs. Samer Rastam, Fadi Hammal, Tagrid Asfar, Fouad M. Fouad, Wasim Maziak, Ken Ward, and Thomas Eissenberg.
- The winners of the SRNT fellowship granted by SCTS are:
 - * Hala Tamim (Lebanon, American University of Beirut)
 - * Mokhtar Hamdi Cherif (Algeria, Observatoire Tabac Afrique Francophone)
 - * Gholamreza Haydari (Iran, National Research Institute of TB and Lung Disease)
 - * Rawad Saleh (Lebanon, American University of Beirut)
- Joint sponsorship of a workshop on waterpipe smoking at AUB in May, 2005: SCTS together with American University of Beirut (AUB) and Egyptian Smoking Prevention Research Institute (ESPRI) are joint organizing a one-day workshop on waterpipe smoking “The Nargileh: Friend or Foe?” during the Middle East Medical Assembly (May 12-15, 2005- Beirut).
- Drs. Ward and Maziak will participate in a conference of the Open Society Institute in Varna, Bulgaria (June 8-10, 2005) to talk about the capacity building experience of SCTS.
- The Research Assistance Matching (RAM) program will be officially launched at the SRNT Annual Conference in Prague. The program will help researchers in less- developed countries increase their access to expertise and experience of the international tobacco control research community.
- “Aleppo says No to Smoking” campaign had been launched recently by SCTS. This campaign is a multi-aspect initiative aiming to increase awareness of the dangers of smoking, lobby for smoking restrictions, and provide professional cessation services.

Recent activities - ongoing researches:

Prevalence of obesity and the associated factors in Aleppo, Syria

Using data from the first Aleppo Household Survey (AHS) conducted in 2004 in Aleppo, this study provides the first data addressing obesity and associated factors in Syria. It shows that most adults in Aleppo are overweight (70.1%, BMI \geq 25 kg/m²) and (38.2%) are obese (BMI \geq 30 kg/m²). The very high prevalence of obesity among women especially in the old age (81%) is a matter of great concern. Age, gender, marital status, and the number of children (among women) are strongly associated with obesity. An inverse relationship is observed between the level of education, the socio- economic status and the prevalence of obesity among women.

Religion, and physical activity do not show an association with the prevalence of obesity. In conclusion, obesity is a major health problem among adults in Aleppo, and the comparability of our current estimates with those from neighboring or developing countries reinforces the need for an effective public health program and the urgent precautions for the control of obesity.

Fouad MF, Rastam S, Ward KD, Maziak W.

In this issue:

What's New:	1
Recent activities- ongoing research	
Prevalence of obesity and associated factors in Aleppo, Syria	1
Characteristics of completers and drop-outs in Syria's first smoking cessation trial	2
A pilot study to validate waterpipe puff topography	2
Published studies	
Patterns of waterpipe use and dependence: implications for interven-	3
Standardizing questionnaire items for the assessment of waterpipe tobacco use in epidemiological studies	3
Smoking among adults in Syria: proxy reporting by 13–14 year olds	3
The Syrian Center for Tobacco Studies: a model of international partnership for the creation of sustainable research capacity in developing countries	3
Are waterpipe users interested in quitting?	4
Tobacco smoking using a waterpipe: a re-emerging strain in a global epidemic	4
Estimating the beginning of the waterpipe epidemic in Syria	4

Characteristics of completers and drop-outs in Syria's first smoking cessation trial

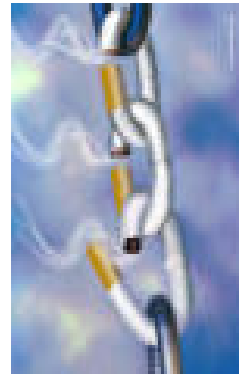
Many developing countries lack culturally appropriate and effective smoking cessation interventions. In Syria, smoking rates are double and quit rates half of what is observed in the developed Countries, but cessation services are not available.

To determine the feasibility of implementing clinical trials of smoking cessation interventions in Syria, we randomized 50 smokers to either a brief (single session) or intensive (4 face-to-face sessions plus 6 phone follow-ups) hospital-based, free, behavioral counseling intervention. Subjects were recruited through newspaper ads, physician referrals, and word-of-mouth.

Across treatment conditions, mean age was 34.8 ± 11 years, 86% of enrollees were men, and 64% smoked more than 20 cigarettes/day. Whereas 100% of subjects in the brief (single session) intervention completed treatment, only 40% completed the intensive treatment. Drop-outs ($n = 15$) and completers ($n = 10$) in the intensive intervention had similar levels of motivation and confidence regarding quitting at baseline. However, drop-outs were less educated (67% vs. 20%, respectively, not completing high school), had smoked for fewer years (10 vs. 18) but were more dependent, as evidenced by a higher smoking rate (80% vs. 30% smoking > 20 cigarettes/day), higher FTND score (5 ± 2.3 vs. 4 ± 2.9), smaller number of previous quit attempts (80% vs. 100% quitting at least once), and lower likelihood of past success at quitting (47% vs. 20% having no successful attempts) (all p-values <0.05).

Results indicate that nicotine dependence is an important barrier to retention in smoking cessation trials in Syria. Increasing the availability of pharmacological therapy is likely to help this effort.

Asfar T, Ward KD, Vander Weg MW, Hammal F, Eissenberg T, Maziak W.



The first smoking cessation trial in Syria

A pilot study validate waterpipe puff topography in the East Mediterranean region

In many cultures, tobacco smoking is accomplished with a waterpipe. A sharp rise in the popularity of the waterpipe (also known as arghileh, hookah, hubble-bubble, narghile, shisha) has been noted in the nineties of the last century in the Arabic region. Understanding waterpipe use and its effects is important, because of tobacco's well-known risks to individual and public health. Waterpipe smoke contains considerable amount of nicotine, and waterpipe smoking has been shown to produce high levels of nicotine metabolites in the blood and other body fluids of smokers. To date, there have been no studies related to tobacco dependence in waterpipe despite the fact that there are many clinical laboratory studies for cigarette smoking. Nothing is known about waterpipe puff characteristics (puff volume, puff duration) despite that puff characteristics have a marked relation to nicotine delivery. Advancing our understanding of this issue is of major importance for the design of intervention strategies to curb waterpipe's popularity.

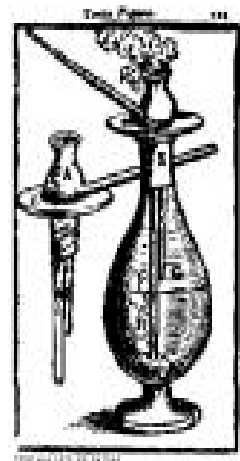
This study includes 20 Syrian daily waterpipe smokers (18-55 years old).

Our specific aims are:

- 1) Describe the waterpipe dependence level, smoking behavior, and subjective effects of smoking in a sample of waterpipe smokers.
- 2) Characterize the waterpipe puff topography of waterpipe smokers.
- 3) Validate the "Hooked on waterpipe" scale.

Accomplishing each of these aims is important in our long term goal of developing a culturally sensitive tobacco cessation intervention in the Middle East.

Rastam S, Maziak W, Ward KD, Eissenberg T.



Waterpipe smoking has been shown to produce high levels of nicotine metabolites in the blood .

Published Studies:

Patterns of waterpipe use and dependence: implications for intervention development

Despite the dramatic increase of tobacco smoking via waterpipe in Arab societies, and the apparent potential of waterpipe use to produce tobacco-related disease, little is known about the pharmacological effects of this method of tobacco smoking, particularly its ability to support dependence. This review focuses on recent waterpipe research and current theories of dependence in an attempt to identify patterns of waterpipe use and features likely to reveal dependence. Recent work indicates that, relative to cigarette smoking, this form of tobacco use is characterized by more intermittent use, later age of onset, greater spread among women and lower interest in quitting or appreciation of addictive properties. Waterpipe use is associated with classic features of tobacco/nicotine dependence, as well as features unique to this tobacco use method. However, even shared features of dependence, such as craving and addiction-induced socio-cognitive behavioral changes, can be displayed differently in waterpipe users, indicating the need for waterpipe-specific research approaches. Preliminary evidence suggests that an important step toward dependence involves a transition from social to individual patterns of waterpipe use.

Surveillance and research into factors affecting use and cessation of this tobacco use method should pave the way for the development of effective prevention and intervention strategies to curb the burgeoning waterpipe use epidemic.

Maziak W, Eissenberg T, Ward KD. Patterns of waterpipe use and dependence: implications for intervention development. *Pharmacol Biochem. Behav* 2005 Jan.; 80(1)173-9.

Standardizing questionnaire items for the assessment of waterpipe tobacco use in epidemiological studies

Lessons from surveillance of the smoking epidemic show that the lack of adequate attention to standardizing measures and instruments for epidemiological studies, has negatively influenced our ability to assess special and secular trends in smoking worldwide. Waterpipe smoking, another hazardous form of tobacco use, is gaining popularity worldwide, with societies in the Eastern Mediterranean region (EMR) being most affected. Several research groups are currently investigating the epidemiology of waterpipe smoking among various populations in the EMR. Initial evidence shows that in contrast to usage patterns observed in adult cigarette smoking, waterpipe smoking is characterized mainly by intermittent and social use. As such, many measures that have been traditionally used for the study of usage patterns and dependence among adult cigarette smokers are uninformative for waterpipe smoking. Thus, the need to develop standardized measures and terminology for assessment of the epidemiology of waterpipe smoking in different populations is of paramount importance. As the monitoring of waterpipe smoking is in its infancy, the development of consensus measures should facilitate the initiation of effective surveillance that can guide public health response to this emerging epidemic.

Maziak W, Ward KD, Afifi Soweid RA, Eissenberg T. Standardizing questionnaire items for the assessment of waterpipe tobacco use in epidemiological studies. *Public Health* 2005: (in press)

Smoking among adults in Syria: proxy reporting by 13–14 year olds

Despite active epidemiological research related to smoking in Syria in the past few years, there is currently no population-based prevalence data for adult smoking in this country. This study presents the first such figures based on information about the smoking habits of 3066 couples in Aleppo, Syria collected during a survey on respiratory morbidity among 13–14-year-old youths. Reports from the young people indicated levels of parental smoking to be 54% for men and 18% for women. This figure for women is twice that reported previously. The mean number of smokers within the studied households was one smoker per household. Smoking among women was found to be strongly associated with their educational status and their spouse's smoking status. This information is of major importance for public health efforts to deal with the smoking epidemic in Syria, as it indicates a hidden epidemic of smoking among women, most likely due to under-reporting.

Maziak W, Tabbah K. Smoking among adults in Syria: proxy reporting by 13–14 year olds . *Public Health* 2005: (in press)

The Syrian Center for Tobacco Studies: a model of international partnership for the creation of sustainable research capacity in developing countries

Maziak W, Ward KD, Eissenberg T, Klesges RC, Keil U. The Syrian Center for Tobacco Studies: a model of international partnership for the creation of sustainable research capacity in developing countries. *Promot Educ* 2004; 11(2):93-7, 116,134

Are waterpipe users interested in quitting?

Waterpipe smoking has increased dramatically worldwide in recent years, with an estimated 100 million daily users. Research on this traditional Middle Eastern tobacco use method is in its infancy, and little is known about users' cessation-related attitudes and experiences. A random sample of 268 narghile (waterpipe) smokers (40% female; mean age=30 years; range=18–68) was obtained from cafes and restaurants in Aleppo, Syria. The majority of users (86.5%) believed they could quit using waterpipes at any time, but that belief was inversely related to perceived dependence, with only 48.7% of those who thought they were "very hooked" believing they could quit. Interest in quitting was expressed by 28.4% of subjects, with the majority (89.2%) reporting health concerns as a primary reason, and 59.2% having made an unsuccessful quit attempt in the past year. In a logistic regression model, independent predictors of interest in quitting included being married, having smoked for fewer years, and not increasing the frequency of smoking over time, and having family members who do not smoke a waterpipe and disapprove of its use. Results indicate that a sizable percentage of waterpipe users express interest in quitting and have tried unsuccessfully in the past to quit. Waterpipe use needs to be considered in developing effective tobacco use cessation programs in the Middle East.

Kenneth D. Ward, Fadi Hammal, Mark W. Vander Weg, Thomas Eissenberg, Taghrid Asfar, Samer Rastam, Wasim Maziak. Are waterpipe users interested in quitting? *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*. 2005 Jan (in press)

Tobacco smoking using a waterpipe: a re-emerging strain in a global epidemic

Context: The global tobacco epidemic may kill 10 million people annually in the next 20–30 years, with 70% of these deaths occurring in developing countries. Current research, treatment, and policy efforts focus on cigarettes, while many people in developing regions (Asia, Indian subcontinent, Eastern Mediterranean) smoke tobacco using waterpipes. Waterpipes are increasing in popularity, and more must be learned about them so that we can understand their effects on public health, curtail their spread, and help their users quit.

Objective: To conduct a comprehensive review regarding global waterpipe use, in order to identify current knowledge, guide scientific research, and promote public policy. Data sources: A Medline search using as keywords "waterpipe", "narghile", "arghile", "shisha", "hookah", "goza", "hubble bubble" and variant spellings (for example, "hooka"; "hukka") was conducted. Resources compiled recently by members of GLOBALink were used. Study selection: Every identified published study related to waterpipe use was included.

Data synthesis: Research regarding waterpipe epidemiology and health effects is limited; no published studies address treatment efforts. Waterpipe use is increasing globally, particularly in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, where perceptions regarding health effects and traditional values may facilitate use among women and children. Waterpipe smoke contains harmful constituents and there is preliminary evidence linking waterpipe smoking to a variety of life threatening conditions, including pulmonary disease, coronary heart disease, and pregnancy related complications.

Conclusions: More scientific documentation and careful analysis is required before the spread of waterpipe use and its health effects can be understood, and empirically guided treatment and public policy strategies can be implemented.

Maziak W, Ward KD, Afifi Soweid RA, Eissenberg T. Tobacco smoking using a waterpipe: a re-emerging strain in a global epidemic. *Tobacco Control* 2004 Dec; 13(4):327-33.

Estimating the beginning of the waterpipe epidemic in Syria

Waterpipe smoking is becoming a global public health problem, especially in the Eastern Mediterranean region (EMR). We try in this study, which is a cross sectional survey among a representative sample of waterpipe smokers in cafes/restaurants in Aleppo-Syria, to assess the time period for the beginning of this new smoking hype. We recruited 268 waterpipe smokers (161 men, 107 women; mean age \pm standard deviation (SD) 30.1 \pm 10.2, response rate 95.3%). Participants were divided into 4 birth cohorts (\leq 1960, 1961-1970, 1971-1980, >1980) and year of initiation of waterpipe smoking and daily cigarette smoking were plotted according to these birth cohorts. Data indicate that unlike initiation of cigarette smoking, which shows a clear age-related pattern, the nineties was the starting point for most of waterpipe smoking implicating this time period for the beginning of the waterpipe epidemic in Syria. The introduction of new flavored and aromatic waterpipe tobacco (Maassel), and the proliferation of satellite and electronic media during the nineties may have helped spread the new type all over the Arab World.

Rastam S, Ward KD, Eissenberg T, Maziak W. Estimating the beginning of the waterpipe epidemic in Syria. *BMC Public Health* 2004 Aug 64; 4 (1):32.