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Title: Why do women use tobacco? A cross sectional survey from a developing country

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Body: BACKGROUND: In Pakistan the prevalence of smoking among young women has increased to 16.3%. There is a rapid increase in both use of smoking and smokeless tobacco over the decades. This has led to a rapid rise in lung diseases among women. OBJECTIVE: To determine the reasons of increasing tobacco use among women in Pakistan even after knowing of its countless hazards. METHOD: A cross-sectional survey was done on 490 females of aged 15 - 80 years. Questionnaire for tobacco use, developed by WHO, was used in both English and Urdu. Analysis was done using SPSS version 15. RESULTS: Out of 460 women, 13(3%) were current smokers and 79(17.6%) were smokeless tobacco users. 102(22.2%) had used tobacco for more than 6 months in some form. 98% of tobacco users were married, 82% were housewives and 76% were uneducated. 72% women used it for enjoyment, 69% for fear of withdrawal symptoms, 53% in social gatherings, 50% for relaxation, 45% as stress reliever. 25% of tobacco users considered tobacco use harmless and 51% thought its dangerous. CONCLUSION: Various factors were identified for the increase in tobacco use among women in Pakistan. Once started as a social activity not being able to stop for fear of withdrawal symptoms. Lack of knowledge of tobacco's harmful effects also plays a major role. While targeting the masses for reduction of tobacco use it is essential that the reason for increase in tobacco be addressed in order to stop this epidemic.