

Tobacco and e-cigarette use, and exposure to SHS among health sciences students: a national cross-sectional study

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Abstract

Aim: To assess tobacco and e-cigarette (EC) use, and exposure to SHS among pharmaceutical (PHs), nursing (Ns), medical (MDs), and medical dental (Ds) finalists students.

Methods: In 2016, a national cross-sectional questionnaire-based study involved health science schools in Portugal (46.6% online). A descriptive/inferential and regression analysis was performed.

Results: Participants: 2095 students, 79.5% females, mode age 23 years, 34.5% collaboration rate. Of the finalists, more than half had experimented tobacco (in descending order: box cigarettes, RYO, shisha, cigarillos, cigars, $p < 0.001$). Experimentation of EC ranged from 9.3% (MD) to 13.4% (Ns). EC occasional consumption was more frequent than daily. Prevalence of tobacco use was: Ns-22.1% (23.5% in males; 21.8% in females, $p = 0.6$); Ds-19.7% (29.7% in males; 15.9% in females, $p = 0.018$); PHs 19.4% (32.3% in males, 15.1% in females; $p = 0.003$); MDs 12.2% (17.1% in males; 10.2% in females, $p = 0.049$), $p < 0.001$. Among all courses, regular smoking overlaps with college admission; most smokers reported low dependence and desire

to quit, while 20% reported readiness to quit; motivation to quit was not triggered by being a role model; Nursing students reported significantly higher dual consumption and experimentation of multiple tobacco products, $p < 0.001$. Being female or an MD predicted not using tobacco. Exposure to SHS was rather common in leisure spaces and did not significantly varied among courses.

Conclusions: Tobacco use, experimentation of e-cigarette, and exposure to SHS are common among health science students, highlighting the need to implement comprehensive tobacco control policies in health science schools.

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