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## The problem of tobacco use among students of Lublin universities

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Abstract

Introduction. As for operational purposes concerning risk factors and activities in health promotion of the National Health Program, one should find the point of talking about reducing the prevalence of smoking. The main characteristics of tobacco dependence are: inability to stop smoking or significantly reducing it, the emergence of withdrawal syndrome caused by smoking cessation, persistent intake of tobacco, even when serious illness should prompt discontinuation.

Aim. The aim of the research conducted among the students of Lublin universities was to identify the level of nicotine use by young people, to find out socio-demographic components of these behaviours and to determine the need for preventive activities in the field of cigarette smoking

Material and methods. Studies were carried out among full-time students of all the public universities in Lublin: the Medical University (MU), the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University (MCSU), University of Life Sciences (ULS), the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (CUL), Technical University of Lublin (TUL).

Results. The study shows that 75% of students do not smoke cigarettes at all, while among smokers – 12% smoke regularly and 13% occasionally. We noticed a very interesting relationship - it turned out that women smoke more than men and are more likely to declare regular smoking. Also interesting is the fact that people living while studying in the family home and having parents with higher education smoke more.

Conclusions. Nicotine smoking is a serious problem among students of Lublin universities.

## INDEXING

Keywords students; smoking tobacco; tobacco; addiction

Language en

## INTRODUCTION

As for operational purposes concerning risk factors and activities in health promotion of the National Health Program, one should find the point of talking about reducing the prevalence of smoking. These tasks are largely carried out by activation of local governmental and non-governmental organizations working for public health, but also through the use of health system for health promotion and health education. Implementation and realization of educational programs in schools, such as: "Do not smoke in front of me, please", "Clean air around us" and the project "We are refreshing our city – TOB3CIT (Tobacco Free Cities)" increase knowledge about the dangers of tobacco use. An additional element in preventing the harmful effects of smoking are legal regulations, among others, indicating the free of smoking space in the workplace or in public spaces. [1,2]

The main characteristics of tobacco dependence are: inability to stop smoking or significantly reducing it, the emergence of withdrawal syndrome caused by smoking cessation, persistent intake of tobacco, even when serious illness should prompt discontinuation. The intensity and duration of abstinence syndrome vary among individuals depending on the degree of addiction. Symptoms that cause the greatest discomfort are the following: compulsive need of smoking, irritability, anxiety, and difficulty in concentrating. The fact, that the dosage of nicotine can abolish

or reduce tobacco withdrawal symptoms, suggests that this component is the source of addiction. Quitting smoking is not easy. Only 20% of people who have decided to quit are able to persevere in their determination [3,4,5]

## AIM

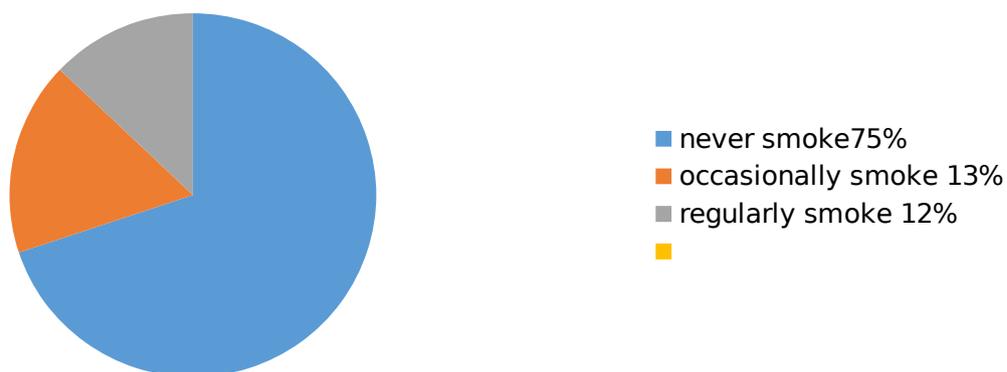
The aim of the research conducted among the students of Lublin universities was to identify the level of nicotine use by young people, to find out socio-demographic components of these behaviours and to determine the need for preventive activities in the field of cigarette smoking.[6,7]

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

Studies were carried out among full-time students of all the public universities in Lublin: the Medical University (MU), the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University (MCSU), University of Life Sciences (ULS), the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (CUL), Technical University of Lublin (TUL). The study was randomized for two years of the studies: the 2nd and the 4th year, which guaranteed averaged results for the entire stage of education at the university. The aim was to collect approximately 150 questionnaires from each university. A total of 752 respondents were examined. After verification, further statistical analysis allowed 691 surveys. From each university a comparable number of surveys was obtained. The questionnaire contained 34 questions (including 9 demographic questions regarding socio-demographic data of respondents). Functions of independent variables were: sex, school, parents' educational level and place of residence during studies.

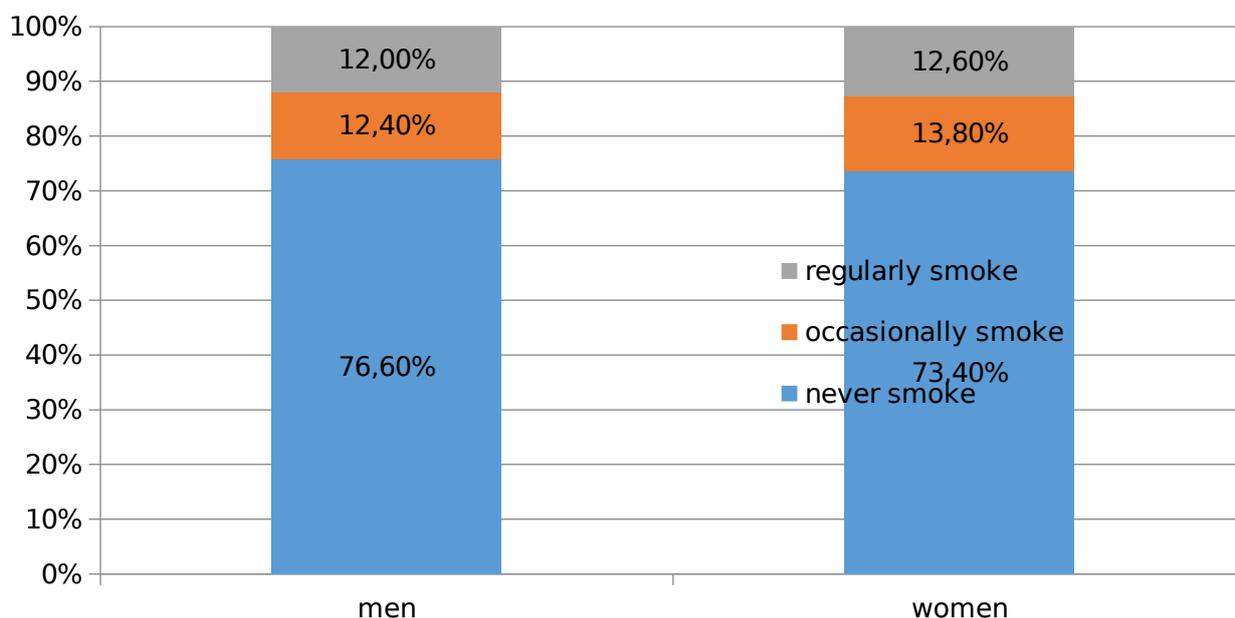
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the survey, one may propose the thesis that the Lublin students have begun to observe the fashion/trend of not smoking. Three quarters of the surveyed young people declared that they do not smoke at all, while 58.4% of them had never smoked. Among smokers – 12% smoke regularly and 13% only occasionally.



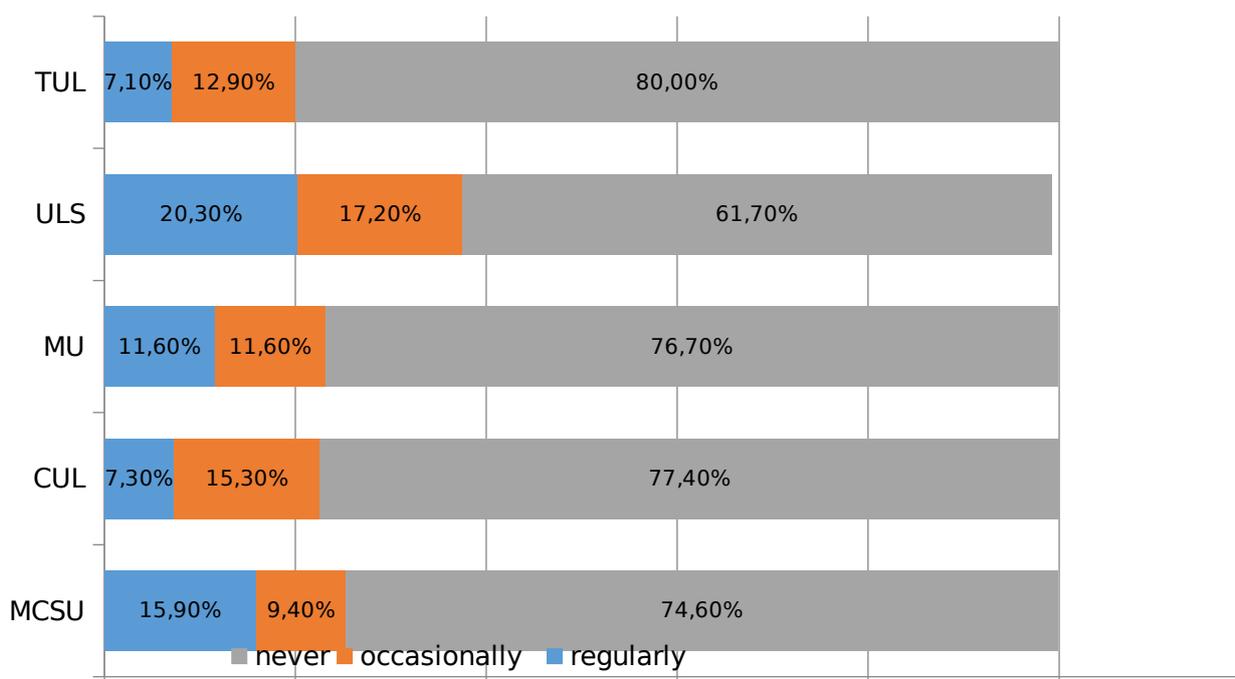
**FIGURE 1. The incidence of smoking cigarettes.**

The analysis of answers to the question on incidence of smoking provides interesting information, taking into account the variability of sex. It turns out that contrary to the nationwide population where women smoke twice less than men – female students smoke more often than male students. Out of the female surveyed students – 73.4% did not smoke at all, in 13.8% smoking was popular, while over 12% confessed that they were regular smokers. The men, often declare that they do not smoke at all and a smaller percentage of them admit to regular cigarette smoking.



**FIGURE 2. Smoking cigarettes and the sex of the respondents.**

Analysis of "university" variable indicates that the place of study does not significantly affect the differentiation of attitudes towards smoking. One should, however, pay attention only to the students of the University of Life Sciences, as the largest proportion of them declare smoking, with more than 20% regular cigarette smokers. Only 61.7% of the surveyed students of this university do not smoke at all – compared to 80% of the students of Lublin Technical University.



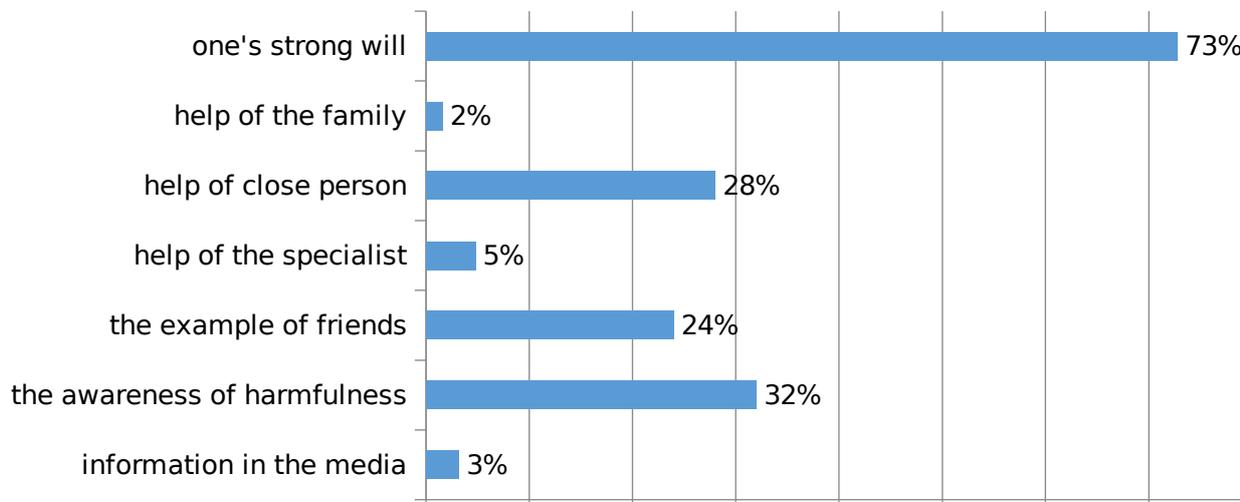
**FIGURE 3. Incidence of smoking at particular universities.**

Interesting may seem the fact that the students who are more likely to smoke have parents with higher education and those who are least likely to smoke are those who come from homes where the parents had lower education than secondary. Less likely to smoke are the people who do not work during their studies.

The respondents also declared a desire to stop smoking (a total of 66.3%), while only less than 35% would like to do it instantly, and almost one third – in later time. Only 8% of respondents

do not wish to stop smoking, and one-quarter of smokers did not think at all about it – which inevitably means that these students do not notice a problem of smoking in their lives. Independent variables did not significantly differentiate attitudes towards smoking cessation.

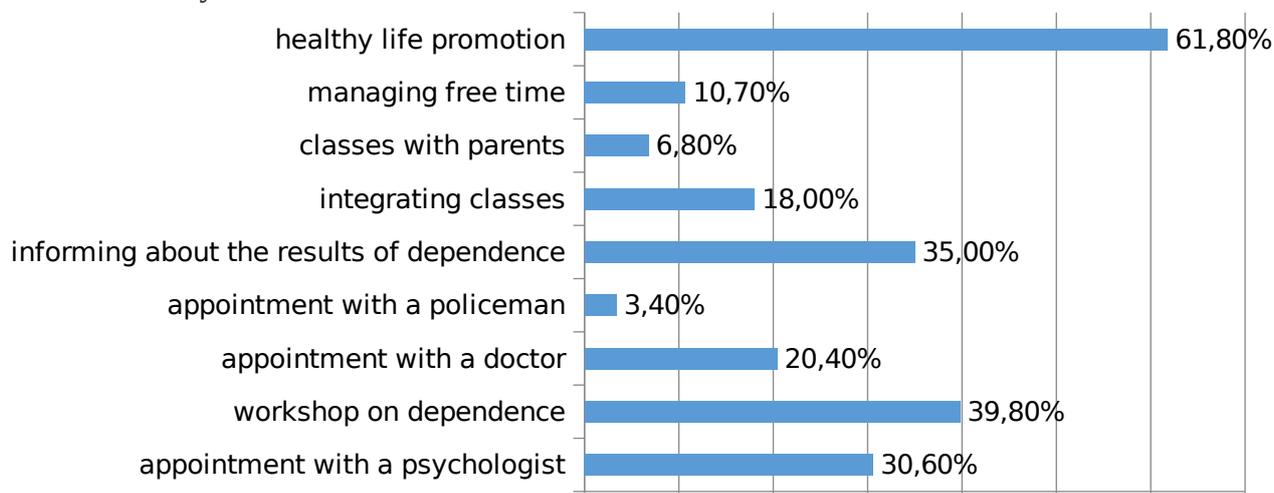
Students who declared their desire to quit smoking were asked what would facilitate their decisions.



**FIGURE 4. Factors facilitating the decision on smoking cessation.**

As it is visible in the presented data, the smoking students are aware of their own responsibility in the process of smoking cessation. The largest percentage of respondents (72%) stated that the decision to give up smoking is dependent on themselves (very strong will). In shaping this "strong-willed" attitude, they would, however, expect help from some close friends and some positive example. It is interesting that almost every third respondent indicated that awareness of the dangers of smoking is necessary. It seems that the surveyed students possess such knowledge, since over 80% of them admit that smoking has a negative effect on the current state of health, and more than 90% confirm the negative impact of smoking on health of the smoker in the future. The fact that smoking students do not expect any help in giving up smoking from specialists, as only 4.8% indicated such a need, is also surprising.

As for the question about the expected activities of the organization to support people who have a problem with smoking, young people mainly rely on prevention and health promotion, what was confirmed by 61% of students.



**FIGURE 5. The expected actions on the part of organisations helping individuals with smoking addiction.**

One also notices the desire for knowledge about the consequences of addiction – both health and social (35%) consequences; the expertise of the doctor is expected by every fifth respondent, and nearly 40% would expect workshops on substance abuse, which in an active way would assimilate knowledge and skills in this field. It is also worth noting that over 30% of the respondents emphasize the fact that in the prevention of smoking education, some important psychosocial skills, like coping with stress, problem solving, and the development of these skills are important as well as meetings with a psychologist, what is also postulated by the respondents.

Important for planning an effective prevention is to convince young people that they should not smoke cigarettes.



**FIGURE 6. The factors conditioning smoking cessation by students.**

The students indicate two types of competences that should be presented to a young man and which can provide a kind of buffer against starting up smoking. These are: greater knowledge and awareness of the health effects of smoking and psychosocial competence manifested in the ability of coping with problems. The effective prevention does not preclude the negative sanctions in the form of punishing individuals for selling cigarettes to minors, as well (although much less likely) the same punishing of minors for their smoking.

Discussing the results of the study, we conclude that 75% of students do not smoke cigarettes at all, while among smokers – 12% smoke regularly and 13% occasionally. We noticed a very interesting relationship - it turned out that women smoke more than men and are more likely to declare regular smoking. Also interesting is the fact that people living while studying in the family home and having parents with higher education smoke more. In the study it can be seen that the most devoted smokers are the students of the University of Life Sciences, and the least devoted – the students from the Technical University of Lublin. Out of the respondents, 66% of smokers would like to stop smoking, but only 35% would do so instantly. Every third respondent considered quitting, but not exactly at the present moment, and 8% of the respondents in general do not really give it a thought. The most important factors for smoking cessation mentioned by students are: strong will, awareness of the dangers of smoking, help of a loved one and an example of friends. In terms of the expected activities of organizations that help people who have problem with smoking, respondents focused primarily on the broader health promotion. They pointed to the need of promoting healthy lifestyle and health education regarding the dangers of smoking and the effects of addiction. They would expect the organization to conduct workshops on substance abuse and meetings with a psychologist. For effective prevention, the respondents emphasized the role of health competence (knowledge of addiction), and the competence of personality (coping with stress, problem solving). They also drew attention to the need for external solutions: banning the sale of cigarettes to minors, and even punishing minors for smoking. The World Health Organization (WHO) notes the big problem of smoking among young people, as the prevalence of smoking among adults in Poland in 2013 was 30%, including 25% of women and 34% of men. Smoking causes high mortality due to respiratory diseases in the society. The WHO data show that smoking initiation of nicotine is decreasing among young people and that nicotine is reached by women. In

case of men, smoking causes disease that is one of the leading causes of death. [8,9]

## CONCLUSIONS

1. The vast majority of the respondents do not smoke at all.
2. Among the students, women smoke more often than men and more often declare regular smoking.
3. More often smokers are the students living while studying in a family home and having parents with higher education.
4. The students of the University of Life Sciences are the most often smokers, while the least often smokers are students of the Lublin University of Technology.
5. Most students who declare smoking would like to quit it in the future, a small part wants to stop smoking right away.
6. The most important determinant of smoking cessation is the strong will and awareness of the harmfulness of smoking.

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