SMOKING STATUS IN THE PHILIPPINES AND THE EFFECT OF TOBACCO CONTROL POLICIES

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BACKGROUND

Smoking is one of the behavioral risk factors to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and a leading cause of preventable disease and deaths.

OBJECTIVE

The study aimed to determine the effect of tobacco control policies to the prevalence of tobacco use among Filipinos, 10 years old and over.

METHODS

Filipinos (n=31,235), 10 years old and over were interviewed using a questionnaire adapted from the World Health Organization (WHO)–STEPwise approach to NCD risk factor surveillance instrument. Effect of tobacco control policies was assessed using price elasticity which was estimated using the proportion of current smokers in the past four surveys and the price of cigarette per pack during those survey years. Analyses were carried out using Stata 12.

RESULTS

A continuous increase in the prevalence of non-smokers among adolescents (86.4% in 2008 to 90.3% in 2015) and adults (54.3% in 2008 to 63.7% in 2015) was observed, as well as a continuous reduction in the prevalence of current smokers among adolescents (9.1% in 2008 to 5.5% in 2015) and adults (34.8% in 2003 to 23.3% in 2015). The largest decrease in smoking prevalence took place between 2008 and 2013, after the Republic Act 10351 or the Sin Tax Reform Law was signed. Results showed that adolescents (-1.0) and those belonging in the poorest wealth quintile (-0.25 for adolescents and -0.35 for adults) were more price sensitive than adults and those in the higher wealth quintiles. But despite the price increase, majority of current smokers did not reduce their cigarette use (64.1%) and frequency of smoking (66.5%), and did not even change their brand of cigarette (53.9%).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Existing tobacco control policies and programs have already contributed to the significant decline in smoking prevalence, particularly preventing smoking initiation. However, there are still pockets of use that need to be addressed, such as reduction of tobacco supply, if the tobacco scourge is to be eradicated in the country.