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## EDITORIAL

### Preventing smoking and tobacco usage in youth

Tobacco use is responsible for about 430,000 deaths among adults in the United States (United States Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2001). Tobacco use in adolescents occurs mainly in the form of cigarette smoking, cigar smoking and tobacco chewing, also known as spit tobacco. Health effects of direct smoking through inhaling the cigarette contents as well as effects due to second hand smoke exposure are well established and range from coronary heart disease to cancer of mouth, stomach and esophagus (USDHHS, 2001).

The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBSS) designed to study priority health risk behaviors among adolescents between October 2004 and January 2006, found that 54.3% of students nationwide had ever tried cigarette smoking (life-time cigarette use), 23.0% of students had smoked cigarettes on  $\geq 1$  of the 30 days preceding the survey and 9.4% of students had smoked cigarettes on  $\geq 20$  days of the 30 days preceding the survey (current cigarette use) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC, 2006a). It was also documented that nationwide 14.0% of the students had smoked cigars on  $\geq 1$  of the 30 days preceding the survey. It is seen that smoking addiction begins in adolescence: a majority of smokers start using tobacco in the age group between 11-13 and about 10-15% starting after age 19 (CDC, 2006a). The Global Youth Tobacco survey begun in 1999 by the WHO (World Health Organization), the CDC, and the Canadian Public Health Association, which is a school-based survey, includes questions on prevalence of cigarette and other tobacco use in 132 different countries (CDC, 2006b). The salient findings of this survey conducted from 1999-2005 found that any form of tobacco use was highest in the American and European regions (22.2% and 19.1% respectively) and lowest in the South-East Asian and Western Pacific Region (12.9% and 11.4%, respectively). Furthermore, current cigarette smoking was highest in the European and American