



Editorial — “No Smoking”?

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The Editorial Board

It is desperate and indeed hurting to know that cigarettes are being sold in the medical canteen, and to watch students buying packets after packets, then smoking and inhaling these “beautiful white cylindrical sticks” in the canteen, in the common-room, as well as around the campus, polluting the atmosphere and attracting attention.

Seemingly, the number of (medical) students that have joined the smoking class is steadily increasing. It is difficult for most smokers to explain just why they smoke. Sociability, custom, and nervous habits are undoubtedly factors. It appears that most youngsters (medical students inclusive) start smoking in order to show independence of authority to feel sophisticated and grown up, to gain social status, to be “one of the crowd,” or to have something to do with their hands and mouths. Advertisers of cigarettes have skillfully created, “successfully,” an image of a smoker as an outstanding handsome athlete to a greater or lesser extent in such a distorted picture of the cigarette smoker.

Nonetheless, it is plain that medical students are at an advantage to others since they are bestowed with the knowledge of the effects of smoking on our human body, which effects are irritating, deleterious and occasionally fatal. However smokers who are medical students are playing with their own life, putting it to have some expected disaster, consciously sacrificing it.

Smoking has had effects upon the circulatory system, increasing the heart rate, raising the blood pressure and constricting the blood vessels. Dramatic changes with palpitation, tachycardia and cardiac irregularities may occur. The heart is under increased work load and over a long period this is harmful. Smoking is definitely a serious risk for persons who have high blood pressure or a defective heart. It may precipitate anginal attacks. It is a major factor in the causation of “Buerger’s disease.” Death rates from coronary heart disease are higher in smokers. It is well known that excessive smoking causes rough hoarseness, bronchitis, and other related conditions. Tobacco smoke is irritant to the respiratory tract mucous membrane, it also destroys the protective (ciliary) mechanism of the respiratory portal. One may be familiar

with terms like “smokers’ throat,” “smokers’ cough,” “smokers’ larynx,” and “smokers’ bronchitis.” The inhalation of cigarette smoke can produce changed characteristic of pulmonary fibrosis and emphysema. More horrifying is the relationship between lung cancer and cigarette smoking. As cigarette smoking is causally related to lung cancer in man, the risk of developing lung cancer increases with the duration of smoking and the number of cigarettes smoked per day, and is diminished by discontinuation. Smoking a cigarette stops the hunger contractions. This is why habitual smokers eat less and are often readily undernourished. Smoking also retards the secretory activities of the alimentary tract. Smokers suffer many digestive ailments, ranging from simple “heart burn” to ulcers. There is also evidence that smoking increases the incidence of cancer of the lip, tongue, and mouth. And it affects athletic performance.

So, medical students, are you foolish enough to smoke to death, if not illness and disability? There is already abundant evidence that smoking is harmful. Ask yourself this question: “Should one smoke?” From the standpoint of health and length of life the answer clearly is “NO.”

Another damage that smokers cause is air pollution. A group of smokers sitting around a table in the canteen would create a sphere of white smoke that extends and spreads outwards in all directions. The effect of the smoke in other colleagues, other frequenters of the canteen is annoying, choking, and hostile. It goes without saying that the Medical Society or the Fraternity Committee should look into students’ welfare. Smoking imminently is going to be a problem when there is more room for students’ activities after the new plan of the extension of the medical library is finished. Should the common-room be a smoking (and gambling?) room or should “NO SMOKING” be allowed in the student common-room?