

## **Abstract**

**Title:** Prevalence and factors influencing cigarette smoking among medical and non-medical university students in Tbilisi, Georgia: a cross-sectional study

**Author:** Maglakelidze Nino, MD

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Supervised by Prof. Dr. Ivane Chkhaidze

**Key words:** smoking, prevalence, medical students, education, factors, University

**Background:** Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death worldwide. Huge share of today's smokers come to newly independent countries of Soviet Union, due to its unregulated anti-tobacco laws and markets. Smoking prevalence is especially high among youth although it is proven that they should be targeted as priority for anti-tobacco campaigns. **Methods:** A cross-sectional, self-administered, anonymous survey of medical and non-medical students of two major Universities of Tbilisi, Georgia was conducted in March 2010. The study explored prevalence of smoking and factors influencing smoking among them. Whether medical education had an influence on smoking or no was also assessed by comparing results of two universities. **Findings:** A total of 400 (200 medical and 200 non-medical) students participated in the study. From them, 48.9% reported being current smokers (50.3% among medical students) (47.5% among non-medical students). Mean age of having first contact with cigarette was 14 among smokers and 13 among non-smokers. Prevalence of smoking was much higher in male participants than in females. Medical students did not demonstrate better awareness about harmful effects of smoking compared to other students. Willingness to quit smoking was expressed almost evenly by medical and non-medical students, (61.2% in medical students) (56% in non-medical students). **Conclusion:** This study shows that smoking prevalence in medical and non-medical students of Georgia is extremely high. The gap in smoking related education among medical students was evident and this highlights the need to identify factors to be included for improving anti-smoking education in the universities and planning effective anti-smoking programs.