

Evaluation of Tobacco Control Law at Cafe' and Restaurants

To the Editor,

The study entitled "Evaluation of the Tobacco Control Law at Cafes and Restaurants" (1), which is published in this issue of your journal, is rather important for the inspection of the implementation of the law to ban smoking in indoor areas, which was enacted in 2008 in our country.

Smoking is still the most significant cause of diseases and death. It is known that smoking caused approximately 100 million deaths, particularly in developed countries in the 20th century. It is expected that smoking-induced deaths would reach approximately 1 billion in the 21st century, particularly in underdeveloped and developing countries.

It is also well-known that second-hand smoke increases morbidity and mortality rates associated with tobacco as well as active smoking. In the recent studies, third-hand smoke has been mentioned as a new threat. Experimental studies have revealed that even 24 h after smoking, particularly in closed areas without a ventilation system, some substances such as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, nitrosamines, and nicotine still remain and they can be absorbed into the skin through contamination or inhalation (2, 3). Therefore, the implementation of smoke-free air zones in indoor areas is the most important step of tobacco control programs. According to the World Health Organization's The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, six targets (MPOWER) were identified in 2008. One of these targets is to protect non-smokers from the smoke of tobacco (4).

With the Law no. 4207 enacted in 1996 in our country, a smoking ban was introduced in health, cultural, and educational places; indoor sports facilities; public institutions; and workplaces consisting of more than five workers. This ban was then extended with Law no. 5727 that was made in 2008, and smoking was forbidden in all indoor areas, including restaurants and pubs serving alcoholic beverages. According to the declaration of the World Health Organization in 2012, Turkey is the third country in addition to the United Kingdom and Ireland who have implemented smoke-free air zones in all indoor areas (5).

However, the inspection of the implementation is as important as the enactment of the laws. The study published in this issue of the journal, with the title "Evaluation of the Tobacco Control Law at Cafes and Restaurants," has revealed significant results in this respect. In this study, researchers administered questionnaires, which included questions about the smoking behaviors and the last law, to the business owners, workers, and clients of cafes and restaurants located in two districts of Ankara. Because most of the businesses were cafes and patisseries where the young people went, a great number of the participants consisted of the young population. As stated by the researchers, this is the limitation of the study because this result cannot be generalized for the entire strata of society. On the other hand, because most of the workers in these businesses were young, the results of the study about the opinions of the young on the law are important for protecting the health of workers. Third-hand smoke, which has been discussed recently, mostly affects the workers in these places. Of the participants, 21.3% of workers and 11.2% of clients were active smokers for a long time. Active smokers among workers and clients rarely believe that smoking causes serious health problems, and most of them think that the law will not be useful for smoking cessation and that smoking desires of clients are restricted unfairly. However, approximately 2/3rd of active smokers among workers and clients agree that the law protects the health of workers. The most important result of the study is that there were people who were smoking at the time of the visits in 22.7% of the businesses, and there was an area enclosed with glass walls for smokers in 57.1% of the places.

According to these results, the rate of smoking among the young population and particularly the workers in cafes and restaurants is higher than expected, and people smoke in 1/5th of the businesses despite the law. This shows us that the implementation of the law is not sufficiently inspected. It is very important to protect the young population working in these businesses from second- and third-hand smoke. Therefore, further studies are needed, such as including different businesses in different regions where an older population is also present.

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Received Date: 20.01.2015

Accepted Date: 20.01.2015

Available Online Date: 27.02.2015



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DOI: 10.5152/ejp.2015.25733

• Available online at www.eurasianj pulmonol.com

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