Title: The effectiveness of “pictorial warnings on cigarette packs on the initiation of smoking and quitting intentions” among school children

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Abstract: Introduction  
Tobacco use is the leading cause of morbidity and mortality worldwide. The Framework Convention for Tobacco Control, the first World health treaty, has set out guidelines for policy change to promote tobacco control. One such intervention is the implementation of large pictorial health warnings on tobacco products. Evidence suggests that pictorial warnings are more effective than text warnings. The effectiveness of such warnings is associated with their size, their location, the graphic nature of the pictures, and the specificity of the message. Cultural and contextual factors within a country also influence the effectiveness of a particular warning. An evaluation of a range of possible pictorial warnings prior to the implementation of a law requiring such warnings will inform choice of warning and enhance impact of the law. To date there has been no evaluation studies of pictorial warning among youth in the EMR.

Method:  
A random sample of 30 public and private schools across Lebanon were selected using a stratified random sample from a list of all schools obtained from the Ministry of Education. Eighty-three students aged 13-17 years were selected in each school and parental consent and child assent requested.

Materials:  
A total of three mock packs, one that has the current text warning used by the Ministry of Public Health and a combination of 2 different pictorial warnings were shown to youth. The youth were asked to complete a survey about their reaction to each of the mock packs. The survey included questions on demographics, smoking behavior, knowledge of the impact of smoking on health, and their response to the pictorial warning. The response includes their overall perception of effectiveness, their attitudes towards the warning in terms of perceived susceptibility and severity, and the warning’s influence on intentions and self efficacy not to smoke or to quit.

Results:  
Results of the analysis will be presented including overall perceptions of most effective pictorial warnings as well as differences between genders, ages, and smoking status.

Discussion:  
The following study aimed at assessing the impact of pictorial warnings on cigarettes packs on youth attitudes and intentions to smoke. Results will inform policy makers in selecting warnings that are most effective to achieve tobacco control objectives. Recommendations for policy makers and for future research will be suggested.

Keywords: impact, pictorial warning, smoking, prevention, adolescents, health policies.

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