

'Great laws on tobacco but poor implementation'

Payal Gwalani | Jun 1, 2016, 04.48 PM IST

Nagpur: The Indian government has devised some great policies about manufacturing and selling [tobacco](#) products. However, the various implementing agencies have not been able to take full advantage of them, mostly due to there being no coordination between them.

This point was brought forth during an event at Government Dental College and Hospital ([GDCH](#)) to mark World No Tobacco Day on Tuesday. **Director of Mumbai's Seksaria Institute of Public Health Dr Prakash Gupta** spoke on 'Opportunities and challenges in tobacco control in India' to young dental professionals.

"The burden of tobacco related diseases in India is very high. This is because of consumption of smoking as well as smokeless tobacco, including areca nut and betel nut, being high. The awareness about the harmful effects of these products has been increasing over the years but the advocacy needs to spread to the smaller cities and villages as well," said Dr Gupta. He said this required a comprehensive plan and cohesive efforts from several quarters.

He gave examples of laws like Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act and Juvenile Justice Act as good policy decisions and opportunities. "In fact, India leads the world in terms of the area of package covered by pictorial warning, which is 85%. All these laws can deter people from using tobacco products. When the demand is less, the supply will eventually reduce as well," said Dr Gupta. For taking advantage of them, though, coordination between FDA, police and other implementing authorities was important, he added.

GDCH dean Dr Vinay Hazarey shared his views on targeting schoolchildren in order to ensure the younger generation did not get hooked to the habit.

"Unfortunately, there are too many children consuming tobacco. It would be great if we could make all our educational institutions tobacco-free," he said.

Dr Hazarey also spoke about how all students and staffers at GDCH played an active role in creating awareness and advocacy about the effects of tobacco consumption on people's health. He said he believed the responsibility of health professionals in Nagpur was huge since the region was known as the kharra and oral cancer capital of the country.