Midwakh/Dokha Tobacco Use as a Health Emergency in the South of Fars Province, Iran

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Dear Editor,

Dokha has been smoked by Bedouins and sailors in Arab countries since ancient times. It is a combination of dry tobacco leaves smoked in a pipe called “Midwakh”. This traditional pipe of Arab countries is a small tool, which has a small bowl and is filled with about 0.5 g of Dokha for each use. People who smoke Dokha can usually completely burn and refill the tobacco in Midwakh only with two inhalations (1).

This tobacco is a combination of tobacco leaves with all kinds of skins, herbs, spices, dried flowers, or dried fruits and has up to five times more nicotine than regular cigarettes (2). Although there is evidence of the effect of Dokha on people’s health, health officials are concerned that Dokha may be considered a better alternative to other forms of smoking in the community (3). Dokha consumers often have the misconception that using Dokha is less harmful compared to tobacco and cigarettes (4). Dokha is a popular type of tobacco product that is used in various parts of the Middle East, especially the Persian Gulf (2). Nonetheless, tobacco is one of the leading causes of death in the world. According to reports, approximately 13 out of 24 million children (13-15 years old) worldwide use smokeless tobacco products (3). The use of non-smoking tobacco products has grown significantly in recent decades. Nearly 36% of global tobacco consumers use exclusively non-smoking tobacco products (5). Meanwhile, the use of Dokha has become common in parts of the Arab world and its popularity is increasing (2). Based on evaluations, the use of Dokha causes many problems for people’s health. High levels of nicotine cause side effects such as dizziness, increased systolic blood pressure, increased heart rate and respiratory rate, as well as lip and oral cavity cancer (6,7). In a study by AlMulla et al on tobacco users (617 people) in Qatar, 4.7% of the consumers of tobacco products used Dokha (8). The findings of a study by Crookes et al demonstrated that a large number of high school students in Dubai (72.1%) have employed tobacco in their lifetime. Dokha was the most applied popular substance (54.8%) among regular tobacco users (9). Smoking is common in Arab countries in addition to other Middle Eastern countries, including Iran (10). Unfortunately, in Iran, various tools with a highly diverse and attractive appearance, along with hookah shops have attracted young people. Industrial and herbal drugs are freely sold in newsstands and some luxury supermarkets (10,11). In recent years, with the spread of young people turning to industrial narcotics, some people, thinking of facilitating the process of using these narcotics, have designed devices for smoking. Midwakh is one of these instruments.

Due to the high activity of people in the south of Fars province in the market of Midwakh in the Persian Gulf countries, especially in Dubai, Dokha has consumers in some southern cities of Fars province, and the number of Midwakh stores has increased in some southern cities of Fars province. According to reports, Midwakh and Dokha are better known in the southern cities of Fars province than in other cities (12). Midwakh is a new phenomenon in the field of tobacco and is a tool with multiple uses so that the opening of Midwakh stores and the young age of using Midwakh in some southern cities of Fars province are among the concerns raised by the authorities (12,13). For example, about 1.5% of the people of Gerash (about 800 people in the city) are addicted to drugs; this statistic is used to guide, treat, and treat these individuals (12).

According to the above-mentioned explanations, people-centered and socially-oriented methods are among the main ways for combating the use of tobacco products, especially Dokha. Tobacco control efforts in the Middle East and other places are almost exclusively focused on curbing smoking, including smoking cessation, tax increases, and smoking bans in public places (2).
addition to these prevention methods, effective health education programs that target adolescents, especially school students, before they become accustomed to using Dokha may prevent the spread of this problem. The active participation of teachers and parents in educating their children about the effects of tobacco use can help them make their future free of tobacco use. Meanwhile, the increasing use of the Internet among young people can be effectively considered a source of information about the negative effects of various types of including Dokha.

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