Dear Editor,

The 2019-nCoV is a fast-moving threat which has sparked immediate actions by different countries all over the world. Cigarette smoking severs the respiratory symptoms of COVID-19 and smokers are at high risk for death from this disease (1, 2). Exposure to stressful situations or emergency events such as pandemics is associated with changes in substance use (3). Several factors such as culture, gender, and marital status influence the relation of substance use and a pandemic such as COVID-19 (4-6). The availability and use of tobacco have been affected by the current COVID-19 pandemic. The decrease in the use of a specific substance during the COVID-19 pandemic can persist over time and continue even after the COVID-19 pandemic due to adaptations and displacement with other substances (7). Shortage of tobacco due to social distancing measures and disruptions in supply and distribution during the COVID-19 crisis can result in a decrease in smoking rates in some countries. Moreover, unemployment, reduced working, downsized income, and health-related concerns may lead to a reduction in smoking (8, 9).

The signs of an increase in cigarette smoking rates have also been observed in many countries across the world (10, 11). In this regard, higher evidence of substance use could occur due to purchasing tobacco online, experiencing changes in habits or self-medication by substances during a crisis, staying home in quarantine, listening to rumours and bad news, having a feeling of helplessness, having negative financial, and experiencing health impacts (3, 12). However, many countries have encountered the 2019-nCoV pandemic at early stages and before any controlling measures can have an impact. The super spread of the 2019-nCoV disease has led to different responses such as bans on travelling and public gatherings, school closure, contact tracing, investments in the development of drugs and vaccines, and the like. Changes in smoking habits can be associated with changes in everyday habits, lockdowns, and less gatherings with friends in favourite places. Friends may have an important role in helping and quitting smoking by encouraging these individuals to join a local sport or go to the gym (13). However, spending less time with smoking friends while having more time with family as non-smokers may result in reduced levels of smoking (14). It should also be considered that time of the crisis is an important factor in the smoking rate (15). The long-term crisis can lead to mental health problems such as depression and anxiety as predisposing factors for an increase in the smoking rates of the general population (16).

Conflict of Interest Disclosures

None.

Ethical Statement

Not applicable.

References


