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Epidemiological study on the smoking habits of high-school students in certain areas of Crete

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Smoking consists one of most serious public health problems. International studies reveal that the crucial age for the experimentation and the beginning of smoking is the early adolescence. The aim of our study was to determine the prevalence of smoking, investigate the habits, the knowledge and the attitude of high-school students concerning smoking, in certain areas of Crete.

Method & Population: the collection of the necessary information was based on a self-handled anonymous questionnaire about smoking, which was used by the WHO and the Disease Control and Prevention Centre of the USA, for the conduction of the GYTS study. It was distributed and filled in by 961 students of randomly selected high schools, of which three (3) in an urban area, one (1) in a semi-urban area and one (1) in a rural area of Crete. The study was conducted during the school year 2013/14.

Results: 46% of our sample are males and 54% females. 40,9% live in an urban area, whereas 51,4% in a rural area. 67,8% denote non-smokers, 51,5% of smokers were males, 50,6% experimented on smoking at the age of 14-15, and 74,1% smoke less than 20 cigarettes per month. The places they usually smoke are cafes and friends' houses. 43,7% of the smokers have parents who smoke, and 28,9% have a best friend smoker. 91,3% are aware of the harmful consequences of smoking, noting that they learnt about them at school and 36,4% see themselves smoking the next five years.

Conclusions: the early intervention, before lifestyle and health habits are formed, could induce positive results in the reduction and fight against smoking. Health education and prevention programmes are necessary to be applied at the primary education, where the direct and the long term implications of smoking would be clearly demonstrated.