

## West Bengal NSS involved in tobacco control and cancer prevention activities

By : Editor Published On : 16 Jan, 2020 02:00 PM IST



INVC NEWS  
Kolkata,

National Service Scheme (NSS) unit of Jadavpur University, Jadavpur (Kolkata) organised a training programme on the issue of tobacco epidemic for its Programme Officers along with student volunteers. Sambandh Health Foundation(SHF) provided technical support for 'Pledge for Life - Tobacco Free Youth Campaign' along with Narayana Superspeciality Hospital Howrah, Epson India Private Limited and Windows Production.

This was part of an action plan made for NSS activities for the academic year 2019-2020 which includes tobacco free oath for all students, NSS Rural camps, various anti-tobacco activities and competitions. The Programme Officers and Volunteers were made aware about ill effects of tobacco, Cancer prevention, Tobacco Free Educational Institutions and COTPA implementation in the workshop.

Dr SouravDatta, Cancer Surgeon with Narayana Superspeciality Hospital, Howrah said, "Tobacco use harms every organ of the body. Preventing initiation of tobacco products in youth is so far the best solution to the tobacco epidemic. "Prevention is better than cure," as they say. Youth organizations such as NSS pledging against tobacco will help reducing prevalence in the state. A state where we have 1,53,000 deaths every year due to tobacco use. More than 2 crore adults consume tobacco and 438 children initiate tobacco everyday."

Youth and Sports Ministry, Govt. of India is taking major initiative to address huge health issues caused by tobacco usage through National Service Scheme (NSS) in West Bengal. Regional Directorate and State National Service Scheme (NSS) plan for Pledge for life - Tobacco Free Youth Campaign in West Bengal.

Pledge for Life - Tobacco Free Youth' campaign is inspired by the Honourable President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind and supported by Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. This campaign focuses on preventive strategies for youth to abstain from using tobacco and discouraging others also from doing so. This campaign is currently being rolled out in states of Assam, Delhi, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and West Bengal.

Dr. Sanjay Gopal Sarkar, Joint Registrar Jadavpur University, said, "We are enthusiastic to work in this area because we are shocked to hear the number of Bengalis being killed by tobacco every year. It must be in the top priority. There are 32 NSS Units of Jadavpur University and in the state there are 1093 Units. If they all mobilize community to prevent youth initiation of tobacco products, this will bring a remarkable change in the society. We are committed to work for this noble cause. He further added that we will make Jadavpur University tobacco free."

Sanjay Seth, Trustee & Head Tobacco Control, said, "More than 2 crore people use tobacco - smoking and chewing, which has major health impact on users and non-users. Such campaigns which focuses on prevention are bound to bring social reforms. NSS has done wonders in social welfare. They are now committed to bring this change in community through Pledge for Life-Tobacco Free Youth campaign."

More than 9.6 % initiate tobacco usage before 15 years of age, 16.8 % between 15 and 17 years, 19.8 % between 18 and 19 years and 53.8 % between 20 and 34 years, as per Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS 2017). It is to be noted that 22 % of smokers smoke 10-14 cigarettes per day and on average 9 cigarettes are smoked per day and 29 bidis are smoked per day on average in West Bengal. The mean age of smokeless tobacco initiation is 20 years and 19 years is mean age of smoked tobacco initiation.

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