

The Effectiveness of Tobacco Free Area Policy in Controlling Tobacco at University Sites

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Background: In favor of the economic value of tobacco, Indonesia has minimal anti-smoking policies and regulations. Even though smoking is not permitted in the government offices, health facilities, and schools, the regulation has not yet been fully implemented, particularly in tertiary education institutions such as universities.

Objective: The present study examines the effectiveness of tobacco free area policy in the two universities in Yogyakarta Province (Universitas Gadjah Mada and Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta).

Method : Two cross-sectional surveys on medical student smoking behaviors were conducted in 2003 and 2007 in UGM and UMY, respectively. The prevalence of smoking and quitting effort were measured in both surveys. Student's opinion on tobacco free campus policy was measured in 2007. Subsequently, we did observations and semi-structured interviews among students from several faculties in UGM in 2011.

Results: The percentage of male non-smoker has increased 19.1%, while among female was 1.2%. While 11.9% students stopped smoking when they were admitted in Faculty of Medicine UGM, 6% quitted smoking following the tobacco free campus implementation and 7% reduced the number of cigarettes smoked. Moreover, ninety percent of male and 94% of female students at public schools supported the implementation of tobacco free campus policy. However, the prevalence of smoker in UMY was steady within two years among both sexes, although the current smoker has reduced among males. Observations indicated that there were a few students broke the law, smoking at campus and several students did not recognize about the smoking free area policy at UGM.

Conclusion: The implementation of tobacco free area policy has positive impact on reducing smoking behavior and promoting quitting behavior among medical students in UGM, but not in UMY. Both male and female students unanimously support the tobacco free area policy in both universities. Students at UGM beyond faculty of medicine need to be socialized and educated about the tobacco free area policy.

Keywords: tobacco free area policy, university students, medical faculty