

An Examination of Smoking Status during Pregnancy in Northern Greece

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Introduction

Smoking during pregnancy remains a significant public health concern worldwide, including in Northern Greece. The practice is associated with a multitude of adverse outcomes for both mothers and their babies, including low birth weight, preterm birth, placental complications, and long-term developmental issues for the child. Despite well-documented risks and public health campaigns aimed at reducing maternal smoking rates, the prevalence of smoking during pregnancy remains high in certain regions, such as Northern Greece. Contributing factors include high overall smoking prevalence among women in Greece, cultural normalization of smoking, and limited access to smoking cessation resources tailored to pregnant women. Social determinants play a significant role in shaping smoking behaviors during pregnancy. Women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, those with lower educational attainment, and those experiencing financial or psychological stress are more likely to smoke during pregnancy. Additionally, a lack of strong public health policies and enforcement related to smoking cessation contributes to the persistence of this behavior

Description

The health risks associated with smoking during pregnancy are well established. Tobacco smoke contains thousands of harmful chemicals, including nicotine, carbon monoxide, and tar, which can cross the placental barrier and affect fetal development. One of the most immediate consequences is restricted fetal growth, leading to low birth weight. Babies born to smoking mothers are also at an increased risk of preterm birth, which can result in respiratory distress syndrome, intraventricular hemorrhage, and long-term developmental delays. Smoking during pregnancy is also associated with placental complications, such as placental abruption and placenta previa, both of which pose significant risks to the mother and baby. Moreover, maternal smoking increases the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and long-term respiratory and behavioral problems in children. These outcomes underscore the urgent need to address smoking during pregnancy through targeted interventions [1].

Healthcare providers play a critical role in addressing smoking during pregnancy, but their engagement in Northern Greece appears to be inconsistent. Many healthcare providers do not routinely discuss smoking cessation with pregnant women or provide adequate resources and referrals. This gap in care may be due to a lack of training, time constraints, or the perception that smoking cessation is a low priority compared to other prenatal issues. To reduce the prevalence of smoking during pregnancy in Northern Greece, a multifaceted approach is needed. Training programs should focus on effective communication strategies, motivational interviewing techniques, and the use of evidence-based cessation tools. Providers should also

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be encouraged to routinely screen for smoking during prenatal visits and provide referrals to cessation resources. Stronger tobacco control policies are needed to create an environment that supports smoking cessation. This includes enforcing smoking bans in public places, increasing taxes on tobacco products, and restricting tobacco advertising. Policies that provide financial incentives for pregnant women to quit smoking, such as vouchers or subsidies, have shown promise in other settings and could be adapted for Northern Greece [2].

Conclusion

Smoking during pregnancy remains a pressing public health issue in Northern Greece, with significant implications for maternal and child health. Addressing this challenge requires a comprehensive approach that combines public health campaigns, targeted cessation programs, healthcare provider training, and policy interventions. Peer support networks, where women who have successfully quit smoking share their experiences and strategies, can provide additional motivation and encouragement for pregnant women attempting to quit. These networks can be facilitated through community centers, healthcare clinics, or online platforms.

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