Journal of
Social Behavior and Community Health

We Will Never be Safe from Cigarette Smoke: The Danger of Third Hand Smoke

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ARTICLE INFO

Letter to the Editor

Article History:
Received: 03 Nov 2023
Revised: 20 Nov 2023
Accepted: 25 Nov 2023

ABSTRACT

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Citation: Karimiankakolaki Z. We Will Never Be Safe from Cigarette Smoke: The Danger of Thirdhand Smoke. Journal of Social Behavior and Community Health (JSBCH). 2023; 7(2): 1091-1094.

Smoking is an important risk factor for health and development and should be considered as a confounding factor in studies analyzing potential environmental pollutant (Aurrekoetxea et al., 2013). In addition to the high prevalence of smoking as a health problem, the threats caused by cigarette smoke for people who are exposed to it is a double problem that can be pondered. Exposing to cigarette smoke includes inhalation of cigarette smoke caused by the burning of the cigarette itself and inhalation of smoke exhaled by the smoker (WHO, 2015).

The term third hand smoke (THS) is a relatively new concept, which was first used in 2006 and was then introduced by Winickoff et al. in 2009 (Winickoff et al., 2009). THS is the residue of nicotine and other chemicals that remain on surfaces and dust for a long time after smoking and become airborne through reactions with oxidants and other compounds inhaled into the body (Jacob III et al., 2017; Northrup et al., 2016). Although THS is less concentrated than second-hand smoke, it remains on surfaces for a longer period of time (Kuo & Rees, 2019; Northrup et al., 2016).

In this way, a person is also exposed to THS through the skin (Özpinar, Demir, Yazicioğlu, Bayçelebi, & Yazicioğlu, 2022). Exposure to THS comes from dust and surfaces, inhalation, ingestion (digestion), and skin absorption of cigarette residues in addition to air inhalation (G. E. Matt et al., 2011; Sleiman et al., 2010). Skin absorption is another important method of exposure to dust-bound pollutants (G. E. Matt et al., 2011). Babies and young children are more exposed to the effects of THS due to playing, crawling, and touching surfaces and floors and touching their mouths (G. Matt et al., 2004; Yolton, Dietrich, Auinger, Lanphear, & Hornung, 2005). More than 40% of children, 33% of non-smoking men, and 35% of non-smoking women are exposed to cigarette smoke worldwide (WHO, 2011). The highest exposure to secondhand smoke was in Eastern Europe, the Western Pacific, and Southeast Asia, with more than 50% of the population exposed (WHO, 2011).

Studies have shown that smoking indoors for just one day exposes people to toxins for days or even months (Alberg, Shopland, & Cummings,

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[DOR: 20.1001.1.27832104.2023.7.2.1.1]
[DOI: 10.18502/jsbch.v7i2.14083]

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[DOR: 20.1001.1.27832104.2023.7.2.1.1]
[DOI: 10.18502/jsbch.v7i2.14083]

2014; G. E. Matt et al., 2011; Thomas et al., 2011). THS accumulated in smokers' homes is able to persist even after the homes had been vacant for 2 months (Becquemin et al., 2010; G. E. Matt et al., 2014). A study in Atlanta (2013) reported that almost all participants had never heard of THS and did not know what the term meant (Escoffery et al., 2013). The study by Winickoff et al. showed that there is no awareness of exposure or THS in children (Winickoff et al., 2009). In another study about THS beliefs, it was observed that parents who did not believe in the effects of THS initially tried to quit smoking after learning about THS (Drehmer et al., 2014). This data suggests that having accurate information about THS and its harms can help create a smoke-free environment (Drehmer et al., 2014; Haardörfer et al., 2017).

In the study by Ozpinar et al. (2022), the mean score of belief about THS in smoking pregnant women was lower than that of non-smoking pregnant women, and a high level of education reduced exposure to THS. Belief in THS is an important factor in pregnancy (Özpinar et al., 2022).

Various studies on secondhand smoke showed that education and awareness can be effective in improving knowledge, belief, and performance regarding the prevention of exposure (Karimiankakolaki, Mazloomy Mahmoodabad, & Kazemi, 2023; Karimiankakolaki, Mazloomy Mahmoodabad, Kazemi, & Fallahzadeh, 2019; MazloomyMahmoodabad, Karimiankakolaki, Kazemi, Mohammadi, & Fallahzadeh, 2019). Therefore, it seems necessary to educate and inform about THS, especially in high-risk groups such as pregnant women and children. It is also necessary to integrate awareness and education about THS in care programs.

According to the above, it can be stated as:

- Awareness and information about third hand cigarette smoke should be included in health and self-care education programs.
- Parents who smoke should be involved in their children’s care, especially to prevent exposure to THS.
- Men who smoke should take care of their spouses, especially to prevent exposure to THS smoke in pregnant women.
- It is necessary to justify health care personnel to educate high-risk groups about the danger of THS.

Acknowledgment

We are grateful to all the people who helped us in conducting this research.

Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

Funding

Not applicable.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical considerations have been observed.

Code of Ethics

Not applicable.

Authors' Contribution

Z. K, was involved in write and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Key words

Third hand Smoke, Smoking, Health

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[DOR: 20.1001.1.27832104.2023.7.2.1.1]

[DOI: 10.18502/jsbch.v7i2.14083]

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