

## TOBACCO SMOKING BEHAVIOR AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN POLAND

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**Background:** The purpose of the study was to examine the Polish students' smoking behavior. **Methods:** A group of 671 students of the Poznań University of Medical Sciences (UM) and Adam Mickiewicz University (UAM) from Poznań, Poland aged 19-25 years participated in the study. They completed a questionnaire about tobacco smoking. **Results:** More than half (53.1%) of the participants tried smoking at least once. The most frequent age of the first attempt to smoke was 18 years. Males tried smoking earlier (between 10 and 14 years) than females (between 18 and 21 years); a significant difference. The most frequent reasons for starting to smoke were curiosity and influence by friends. The group of 155 students (23.1%) were active smokers during the study: 10.7% of them smoked regularly and 12.4% occasionally. The age of 18 was the most frequent time when the smoking became regular. Males smoked more frequently than females (insignificant difference). There were differences observed between the kind of school and the frequency of smoking. The UAM students smoked significantly more often than the UM students – 32.8% and 18.6%, respectively ( $p < 0.05$ ). Students of smoking parents smoked more frequently than those of non-smoking parents. Most smokers (80%) were aware of detrimental effects of smoking and most of them declared a will to quit smoking. **Conclusions:** There is still a great percentage of smokers among high-school students in Poland. The age of 18 is the most dangerous time for the development of addiction. Anti-tobacco prevention must be started very early before the age of 18 and continued up to the age of 21.