

I am a student research assistant studying in Australia, working at the Hong Kong University smoking cessation services. In my short time here, I've heard of children as young as the age of 12 calling to seek help with their addiction towards tobacco. However this was not the most shocking thing that I have heard, what was more shocking was their lack of knowledge towards the harm that can be caused by smoking at such a young age, or even the most basic knowledge that one in two smokers die due to smoking.

Parents are not always willing to teach their children due to their own personal addiction and usage of tobacco products. Some who are willing to teach their children are called hypocrites because they smoke themselves. Impressionable children who grow up in these environments look up to smoking, viewing it as something cool and fashionable, and some even begin to bring these harmful views to a school environment where it could cause more harm to other peers.

Soon this becomes a never ending cycle, where the young who are addicted will grow up without this knowledge and pass on this ritual to the next generation. Some who are fortunate enough to receive information about the harm of smoking have to go through the pains of quitting, where they would have to fight their addiction, be subjected to withdrawals and some relapse to fall back into this harmful habit.

In Australia, all cigarettes have the same packaging guidelines, which are the generic black pack, with warnings on the side, and picture warnings of what can happen on the front and back of the package. This has become a successful prevention method, reducing the amount of young smokers around the country. Not only that, it has in fact persuaded many older smokers into fighting through their urges and deciding to quit.

In Hong Kong, the current pictorial health warnings cover 50% of the packages, however it is not the most noticeable object on a cigarette package, where the brand design is much more eyes catching, leading to the warnings to become nothing but mere advertisements. I believe and support an increase of the pictorial health warnings to a minimum of 85%, increasing the severity of the photographs to truly show the effects rather than images that you'd expect to see in a television program, adding a warning, "One in two smokers die from smoking" which will teach people something that most do not know about and adding the cessation services hotline would also be effective to help people who need help to quit.

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