

Engaging the Private Sector in the prevention of Non-Communicable Diseases



A case study series from...

Jordan



Expanding access to nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) in Jordan

SITUATION

According to the 2019 STEPwise approach to surveillance (STEPS) survey on the main risk factors for noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) conducted by the Ministry of Health in collaboration with WHO, 82% of Jordanian males were addicted to nicotine, one of the highest rates in the world. An estimated 50% of adult smokers in Jordan have tried to quit in the past 12 months, yet only a small percentage had access to tools that might help them do so.

Jordan's Ministry of Health maintained just five nicotine cessation clinics. Though nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) has been added to Jordan's Essential Medicine List, budgetary allocations for smoking cessation were insufficient to meet the high demand from smokers seeking to quit.

PROCESS

In late 2020, the Ministry of Health partnered with Access Initiative for Quitting Tobacco (AIQT), a joint initiative between WHO, the UN Interagency Task Force on NCD Prevention and Control and PATH, with support from the Coalition for Access to NCD Medicines and Products. The initiative is designed to assist countries deliver comprehensive tobacco cessation services. Several companies joined the initiative, including Johnson & Johnson, Allen Carr's Easyway, Amazon Web Services, Cipla, Facebook, WhatsApp, Google, Praekelt, and Soul Machines.

The Ministry of Health received its first ever donation of NRT from Johnson & Johnson through its partnership with AIQT. The donation, with an estimated retail value of almost US\$ 1 million, will help thousands of Jordanians and refugees quit smoking during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

- ✓ Access to free NRT, combined with personal counselling and digital support, is mainly being directed to help 5 400 frontline workers, patients with noncommunicable diseases, and refugees quit smoking. The donated NRT has a three-year validity period, from June 2020, and in addition to being used in the five pre-existing cessation clinics, is being used to supply an additional 20 clinics which have been opened across the country.
- ✓ The quantity of medication used in clinics, number of patients treated, and the success rates in stopping smoking are being monitored on a monthly basis. Information is shared with the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and WHO Headquarters, and reported to donors.
- ✓ Through the massive scale-up of tobacco cessation services, Jordan was able to achieve the highest level for the “O” MPOWER measure in the WHO report on the global tobacco epidemic 2021

There was an attempt by the donor company to train pharmacists and promote the purchase of the company’s products directly from the pharmacy. This was promoted as a component of the agreement through which the donation would go to cessation clinics for a certain period. For sustainability purposes a direct purchase from the pharmacy by the smoker should be planned for the next phase.

A decision was made by the WHO Country Office not to engage directly with the company but through WHO Headquarters, and to always refer to the contractual agreement established between the company and WHO Headquarters. Clear rules and contractual framework are key to preventing industry interference/conflicts of interest.

Additional Resources:

<https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/Johnson-Johnson-donates-nicotine-patches-to-help-thousands-of-jordanians-quit-tobacco-during-COVID-19>



Setting up a smoking cessation hotline in Jordan



SITUATION

According to the 2019 STEPS survey conducted by the Ministry of Health of Jordan in collaboration with WHO, 82% of Jordanian males were addicted to nicotine, one of the highest rates in the world. An estimated 50% of adult smokers in Jordan have tried to quit in the past 12 months, yet only a small percentage had access to tools that might help them do so.

Treatment of tobacco use and dependence is mandated in Article 14 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. The WHO recommends three types of treatments be included in any tobacco prevention effort: (i) tobacco cessation advice incorporated into primary health care services; (ii) easily accessible and free quit lines; and (iii) access to free or low-cost pharmacological therapy. Despite the high prevalence of smokers in the country and the demand for help and information about smoking cessation services in Jordan, no Smoking Quitline was available.

PROCESS

The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship partnered with Crystal – a private company which provides helplines for different governmental sectors – to set up the National Smoking Quitline. The Quitline was launched in May 2020 providing smoking cessation services to all residents of Jordan.

RESULTS

The National Smoking Quitline has helped thousands of smokers since May 2020. Its call agents were trained by WHO consultants, and monitoring and evaluation of the service is conducted on a regular basis.

The private company was selected through a tender process and a contract drawn up between the company and the government. A transparent and fair competitive process, and a contract with clear rules, were key to preventing industry interference in government work and conflicts of interest.

Additional Resources:

<http://www.emro.who.int/jor/jordan-news/world-no-tobacco-day-2021-commit-to-quit.html>

Country Conversations

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Jordan

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