


Current Status of NCDs Among Adolescents- A Growing Concern

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Opinion

Current status of NCDs

Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) burden on a global scale is a developing public health emergency that calls for attention and action from the international community [1]. This category of diseases is the major cause of mortality, accounting for 38 million of the 57 million deaths per year, with low and middle income countries accounting for 85% of these fatalities [2]. The adult population has received most of the attention in the discussion of NCD prevention initiatives so far, with adolescents receiving little attention [3] as NCDs are known to typically appear in adulthood, however many of them have their origins in their lifestyle adopted in adolescence and childhood such as smoking, low physical activity, eating poorly, and drinking too much alcohol, mental illnesses, substance use disorders, and chronic physical illness [4]. The burden of disability and mortality from NCDs in adolescents has increased significantly globally [5]. The adolescent population is typically regarded as healthy, and as NCDs are sometimes referred to as “lifestyle illnesses,” minimal attempts have been made to evaluate their health, disease prevention, and lifestyle change. However, a sizable portion of the burden of NCDs worldwide is experienced by teenagers [6,7]. The prevalence of these disorders can be considerably decreased by implementing appropriate health interventions during childhood and adolescence. Between 1990 and 2019, NCD-related mortality among adolescents in the European Union (EU) significantly decreased however the upward trend in Years of Life Lost (YLL) attributable to mental disorders and their years Lived with Disability (YLD) burden are alarming [8]. The study focused on the need for comprehensive, multilevel approaches to public health, evidence-based prevention strategies, investments in specialised primary and specialist universal healthcare services, including extensive training in adolescent medicine, and health-promoting school initiatives. Healthy eating should focus on knowledge that ‘what you put on your plate directly affects your health’ [9]. Unhealthy diets including a high intake of sugars, total fats, saturated fats, trans fats, and sodium are strongly associated with conditions like high blood pressure, high fasting blood sugar levels, and obesity. The widespread accessibility, affordability, and promotion of processed and ultra-processed food products with poor nutritional profiles are the major etiological factors leading to excessive consumption of these “elements of public health concern.”

When compared to young children and adults, a one-size-fits-all approach to health coverage has not resulted in better outcomes for adolescents [10]. The significance of monitoring adolescent health has been reaffirmed by the inclusion of adolescents in the Countdown to 2030 [11] and the Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s, and Adolescents’ [12].

Preventive measure - Front of package labelling

The introduction of a Front of Package Labelling (FoPL) for packaged foods is a priority for India, and with this aim, FSSAI proposed the draft Food Safety and Standards (Labelling and Display) Regulations, 2018. Sadly, this piece of legislation has not yet been implemented. In January 2021, active discussions regarding FoPL resumed after sitting dormant for a number of years. A comprehensive strategy to encourage healthier lifestyles must include front-of- package warning labelling because it enables consumers to quickly, clearly and effectively identify products high in sugar, sodium, saturated fats, trans fats, and total fats—the nutrients linked to the burden of NCDs in India. Non-communicable disease management enhances personal wellbeing and promotes development. Governments, corporations, and communities need to take more effort to stop these diseases from spreading since they have an impact on nutrition, education, and the environment.

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