Smoking in young and adult population, Italy 2009

Irene Tramacere1, Silvano Gallus1, Roberta Pacifici2, Piergiorgio Zuccaro2, Paolo Colombo3, and Carlo La Vecchia1,4

1Istituto di Ricerche Farmacologiche “Mario Negri”, Milan; 2Dipartimento del Farmaco, Istituto Superiore di Sanità, Rome; 3Istituto DOXA, Gallup International Association, Milan; 4Dipartimento di Medicina del Lavoro, Università degli Studi di Milano, Milan, Italy

ABSTRACT

Aims and background. To monitor smoking prevalence and trends of young and adult populations in Italy.

Method and study design. A survey on smoking was conducted during March-April 2009 on a sample of 3213 participants (1546 men and 1667 women), representative of the Italian population aged 15 years or over. Data from a simplified questionnaire were collected in an over-sample of 1010 young individuals, reaching a total of 1390 participants aged 15-24 years (713 males and 677 females).

Results. In 2009, 25.4% of Italians described themselves as current cigarette smokers (28.9% of men and 22.3% of women). Among young people, male smoking prevalence steadily declined from 38% in 2001 to 29% in 2009. Smoking prevalence in young females decreased from 30% in 2001 to 19% in 2008, but increased to 23% in 2009. Among both males and females aged 15-17 years, smoking prevalence was around 10%. This increased in the 18-24 year age group, with 37.6% of current smokers among males and 28.9% among females. Among young current smokers, 45.5% reported that they would reduce the number of cigarettes smoked per day, 11.1% would quit smoking, and 4.3% would switch to hand-rolled cigarettes, assuming that the minimum price of a pack of cigarettes increased to €5.

Conclusions. Our findings indicate that smoking prevalence has decreased over recent years, particularly in the young. Still, over one-fourth of Italian adults are smokers. An increase in cigarette price represents an effective strategy to control tobacco, particularly in the young.

Key words: epidemiology, Italy, population survey, tobacco smoking.

Acknowledgments: This work was conducted with the contribution of the Italian Ministry of Health, the Italian League Against Cancer, and the Italian Association for Cancer Research (AIRC). Irene Tramacere was supported by a fellowship from the Italian Foundation for Cancer Research (FIRC).

Conflict of interest statement: The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

Correspondence to: Silvano Gallus, ScD, Department of Epidemiology, Istituto di Ricerche Farmacologiche Mario Negri, Via Giuseppe La Masa 19, 20156 Milan, Italy.
Tel +39-02-39014657; fax +39-02-33200231; e-mail silvano.gallus@marionegri.it

Received November 5, 2010; accepted February 3, 2011.