

Analysis of Current State of Smoking: A Comparison of Japan and Eight Other Countries

The Editor,

Sir,

A report from Abe (1) has cited the health problems resulting from smoking. In the current study, the status of smoking in Japan has been examined from a variety of perspectives.

This report examined the proportion of habitual smokers by gender in Japan from 2003–2006 as reported to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in the Journal of Health and Welfare Statistics (2) and the number of cigarettes consumed annually per member of the population age 15 years or over in 1990 and 2000 in Japan, South Korea, China, the USA, Canada, the UK, Italy, Germany and France as reported in the Journal of Health and Welfare Statistics (2).

The proportion of habitual smokers in Japan in 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006 was 46.8, 43.3, 39.3 and 39.9 (%) among men and 11.3, 12.0, 11.3 and 10.0 among women, respectively. Compared to the proportion of habitual smokers in 2003 and 2006, the proportion of such smokers in 2006 was lower than the proportion in 2003 among both men and women.

The number of cigarettes consumed annually per member of the population aged 15 years or over was 3037 in 1990 and 3023 in 2000 in Japan, 3022 in 1990 and 2686 in 2000 in South Korea, 1972 in 1990 and 1790 in 2000 in China, 2755 in 1990 and 2082 in 2000 in the USA, and 2030 in 1990 and 1777 in 2000 in Canada. In addition, the number was 2170 in 1990 and 1374 in 2000 in the UK, 2008 in 1990 and 2039 in 2000 in Italy, 2234 in 1990 and 1843 in 2000 in Germany, and 2168 in 1990 and 1594 in 2000 in France. According to these results, the proportion of habitual smokers in Japan has tended to decline in recent years, while the number of cigarettes consumed annually per member of the population aged 15 years or over in 1990 and 2000 in Japan was the highest of the countries studied.

A report (3) noted that annual consumption of cigarettes per member of the population decreased as a result of an increase in the tobacco tax in Canada. The same report also indicated that the price of cigarettes in Japan is lower than that in Europe and the USA. The rise in the price of cigarettes is inversely proportional to the consumption of cigarettes (3).

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