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ADCHARAWAN SROYTONG : FACTORS AFFECTING SMOKING HABITS IN ADOLESCENTS. THESIS ADVISORS : DUSIT SUJIRARAT M.Sc. (Biostatistics), JAYANTON PATUMANOND M.D., M.P.H., D.Sc. (Clinical Epidemiology), NATCHAPORN PICHINARONG Dr.P.H., NAMTIP SRIRAK M.Sc. (Epidemiology), Ph.D. (Tropical Health Program). 140 p. ISBN 974-663-056-3

A cross-sectional study was carried out to evaluate smoking rate, to describe smoking habits, knowledge and attitudes toward cigarette smoking and factors associated with smoking habits in adolescents. Study subjects were 2,243 students selected from ten governmental and private secondary schools in 4 regions (northern, north-eastern, central and southern regions) and Bangkok, between May and July 1998. Stratified random sampling was used. Data were collected by self-administered anonymous questionnaires and direct interview.

The results of this study showed that the overall prevalence of cigarette smoking was 17.6%, 6.0% of whom were current smokers and 11.6% of whom were ex-smokers. Most of them started smoking between the ages of 11-14 years. The smoking habits between the current smoker group and the ex-smoker group differed significantly ($p - value < 0.05$). Among the differences were duration of smoking, occasion of smoking, inhalation practices, number of cigarettes smoked per week and the amount of money spent on cigarettes per week. Their knowledge about cigarettes were not significantly different, whereas their attitudes toward cigarette smoking were significantly different ($p - value < 0.001$). By multiple logistic regression analysis, smoking habits were statistically associated with gender, region, average school grade achieved, participation in athletics, alcohol consumption, smoking by sibling or close friends and stress.

These results suggest that smoking prevention programs among adolescents need to be started at earlier ages, to encourage their negative attitude toward cigarette smoking and increase awareness of the hazards of cigarette smoking.