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1ST EDITION

NGO SPECIAL



Friends Union For Energising Lives
Enabling Students to Excel

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J. V. GOKAL CHARITY TRUST

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J. V. GOKAL CHARITY TRUST is “not-for-profit”, Public Charitable Trust registered within the provisions of Bombay Public Trust Act, 1950. The trust is a national level organization aiming to reach out to the underprivileged and needy communities by providing them Healthcare and Education. Since its inception in 1967, J. V. GOKAL CHARITY TRUST (JVGCT) works with the values of Trust, Devotion and Compassion for the communities it serves.

JVGCT is working across Maharashtra, Gujarat, Manipur, Nagaland, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Odisha through its Healthcare, Educational and Community Development Projects.

According to WHO Country profiles, India has one of the highest rates of oral cancer in the world and rates are still increasing. This disproportionate incidence of oral cancer has been related to the high proportion of tobacco chewers, a habit unique to Indians. Oral cancer accounts for one-third of the total cancer cases and 90% of the patients are tobacco chewers. This is true across a broad spectrum of people, rich and poor, male and female, old and young.

The statistics are eye opening. Only 20% of the total tobacco consumed in India is in the form of cigarettes, about 40% is in the form of bidis and the remaining 40% is consumed as chewing tobacco, pan masala, snuff, gutkha, masher and tobacco toothpaste. These products contain putrefied tobacco, paraffin, areca nut, lime, catechu, and 230 permitted additives and flavours including known carcinogens.

WHO reports suggest that 65% of all Indian men use at least one form of tobacco. For women, the usage statistics differed from 15% in rural Gujarat to 67% in Andhra Pradesh, the overall prevalence being 3% for bidi and cigarette smoking. What is alarming is that fully one third of all women use at least one form of tobacco and in Mumbai, 57.5% of women use tobacco but solely in the smokeless form.

The habit has a high degree of social acceptability. A popular advertisement showed the parents of a bride and groom agreeing to greet guests with pan masala. People who would not dream of smoking, have no such qualms about consuming several packets of pan masala every day, simply because they are unaware of the dangers involved.

Most people have no idea that consuming smokeless tobacco is as dangerous as smoking and while packets of pan masala do bear health warnings, they are rendered almost invisible by the bright shiny packaging and the small size of the warnings. Consequently, unlike smoking, which must be hidden from adults, children can openly consume pan masalas.

Shockingly, younger and younger children are being introduced into this habit, with the first introduction often



being given at home by an elder who is unaware of the dangers he is exposing the child to.

Never tell kids not to smoke or chew tobacco, instead it is better to educate them and offer help in kicking the habit. The lecture should begin with general information about the disease, the warning signs, symptoms, prevention through early detection. The most depressing failures is with children from the lower income levels. It is difficult to convince them to give up tobacco. The habit helps them to deal with their daily lives, it kills the appetite and gives a kick that makes them happy for a while. It is cheaper to buy a packet of gutka than dinner. And it gives them the strength to face challenges of child labour including late night shifts. Sometimes it is their only source of happiness. In such cases, it is best to advise them to pay attention to oral hygiene, to at least brush their teeth before sleeping so that the remnants of the tobacco do not attack the buccal linings overnight and to watch for patches which can be the first sign of cancer.

14.6% of youth are addicted to smoking and other tobacco products and 30.2% of adults are exposed to second hand smoking, of which both are equally dangerous. JVGCT having realized this have initiated anti smoking and anti tobacco campaign among the children.

This campaign is main focused on school children, where our project team visit the school, delivers a talk (interactive session) on smoking and tobacco usage. After this, a special film, which is directed and produced by Aswavedh Foundation on smoking, is shown. This is followed by a question answer session, where the children get to clarify their doubts and queries regarding this subject. After this, a pledge is taken by the students and the copy of pledge signed by them is handed over, which they can carry home as a reminder of their pledge. Currently, this activity is happening in Maharashtra and West Bengal. More than 15,000 students are reached in Maharashtra and 150



students in West Bengal. These activities are carried out with the help of CSR funds of companies namely Radiant (International) Pvt. Ltd. and Vicco Laboratories.

Other than this anti smoking and anti tobacco activity, JVGCT have other projects running nationally. Mobile Medical Units (Talasari, Jambhulpada, Nandurbar, Talegaon and Lonavala, Maharashtra), Jagjivan Low Cost Surgery Center, Nandurbar, Arun Jagjivan Gokal Institute of Community Ophthalmology, Bhubaneswar, Maternal and Child Health Project, Talasari are few of the healthcare projects.

With each day, JVGCT strives to bring in sustainable changes in the life of people whom we come across.