

Tobacco control by public pharmaceutical assistance policies



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ABSTRACT

Smoking is responsible for several diseases and millions of deaths every year, being one of the major causes of preventable death in the world. Defined as the chemical dependence on nicotine in cigarettes, its main associated diseases are lung cancer (about 90%), cardiovascular diseases (about 25%), chronic respiratory diseases such as bronchitis and emphysema, and a higher risk of stroke and respiratory infections. The most effective policies to combat this addiction include increasing

taxes on tobacco products, banning tobacco advertising, creating smoke-free environments, clearly labeling tobacco products, and offering smoking cessation services. In Brazil, the National Tobacco Control Program (PNCT), created in 1986, and the Anti-Smoking Law (Federal Law No. 9,294/1996), are milestones for pharmaceutical assistance, which assists policies in the treatment of smoking. In the pandemic, this dependence was one of the main comorbidities associated with severe cases of COVID-19, which were better controlled by updated health professionals and acting together to guarantee access to essential treatments and support therapies for smokers. Currently, public policies are needed to raise awareness among the population about the risks of smoking and e-cigarettes, avoiding their indiscriminate and uncontrolled trade, among other measures. In this sense, the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) impose coordinated efforts on countries to implement effective tobacco control policies in an integrated, sustainable and democratic manner, with the participation of civil society and health professionals.

Keywords: Pharmaceutical assistance, Public policies, Smoking.

1 INTRODUCTION

Tobacco control in the face of pharmaceutical services and public policies is a topic of great importance in the health area, since smoking is considered a public health problem, where cigarette consumption is responsible for several diseases and deaths worldwide (RIBEIRO, 2022).

Smoking is defined as the chemical dependence of nicotine present in cigarettes, being monitored among chronic non-communicable diseases in Brazil since 2006 (PAHO/WHO, website). Its history of control is marked by certain government actions, such as the creation of laws that prohibit smoking in public places, awareness actions about the harms of smoking and the availability of treatments to help smokers quit smoking (MOCCIO, 2022).

Initially, tobacco control in Brazil began in 1986, with the creation of the National Program



for Tobacco Control (PNCT), whose main objective was to reduce tobacco consumption in the country. Since then, several measures have been taken to combat smoking, such as the prohibition of cigarette advertising on television and other media, the creation of smoke-free environments, the implementation of health warnings on cigarette packages and the increase in the price of the product (TEIXEIRA, 2011).

Only ten years later, when the Anti-Smoking Law (Law No. 9,294/1996) emerged, the consumption of cigarettes began to be prohibited indoors, such as bars, restaurants and nightclubs. For Buteri (2022), the law was an important milestone in the fight against smoking in Brazil, and since then, the country has been internationally recognized for its tobacco control policies. But despite the advances, smoking is still a public health problem in Brazil.

Thus, pharmaceutical assistance is fundamental in this process, as it offers drugs and therapies that help in the treatment of nicotine chemical dependence, in addition to public policies have an important role, as they encourage the adoption of healthy habits and the prevention of smoking-related diseases, since tobacco control is a constant challenge, but it is fundamental for the promotion of health and quality of life of the population (BARRETO, 2022).

According to Fianco *et al.*, (2021) smoking is one of the leading causes of preventable death in the world, accounting for about 6 million deaths per year. The problems that smoking can cause are numerous and affect not only the smoker, but also those who are exposed to cigarette smoke.

Among the diseases associated with smoking, lung cancer, cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory diseases such as bronchitis and emphysema stand out, in addition to increasing the risk of stroke and respiratory infections (SMITH *et al.*, 2022).

A study by Muakad (2014) points out that smoking is a risk factor for sexual impotence, infertility and pregnancy complications and it is estimated that smoking is responsible for about 90% of lung cancer cases and 25% of cardiovascular diseases.

It is important to emphasize that the effects of smoking are not limited only to physical health, but also affect the quality of life, work capacity and self-esteem of smokers, making it essential to adopt measures to prevent and combat smoking, such as the implementation of public policies for tobacco control, the promotion of awareness campaigns and the treatment of smoking (ALCANTARA, 2022).

In view of this, pharmaceutical assistance is a crucial aspect in the fight against smoking, since the role of the pharmacist is fundamental in the follow-up of the patient who wishes to stop smoking, since he is able to guide and prescribe medications that help reduce withdrawal symptoms and reduce the desire to smoke. In addition, the pharmacist can advise on the importance of a healthy diet and physical activities for the maintenance of health and for the success of treatment (CHENCHI, 2021).

Pharmaceutical assistance is essential for the success of smoking treatment, because the



pharmacist is able to offer adequate support and guidance so that the patient can achieve his goal of quitting smoking and improving his quality of life, it is also important in monitoring the side effects of prescribed drugs and in identifying possible drug interactions (FERREIRA, 2022).

It is also worth noting that the COVID-19 pandemic has posed many challenges for healthcare, including the relationship with tobacco consumption and the challenges faced by pharmaceutical care and to deal with these issues professionally and effectively. Since the beginning of the pandemic, much has been said about the relationship between COVID-19 and tobacco, because tobacco consumption is one of the main risk factors for several diseases, including respiratory, cardiovascular and cancer problems (TOMIM *et al.*, 2022).

It is important to note that the pandemic has brought a number of changes in people's routines. Social isolation, anxiety and stress are some of the factors that may have led many smokers to increase their cigarette consumption. In addition, the pandemic may have hindered access to treatments to quit smoking, which may have aggravated tobacco dependence (LIMA *et al.*, 2021).

According to Ferreira *et al.*, (2020) smoking was one of the main comorbidities associated with severe cases of COVID-19. This is because tobacco consumption affects the function of the lungs and immune system, increasing susceptibility to infections and compromising the body's responsiveness.

In addition, smoking can also increase the risk of transmission of the coronavirus, since the act of smoking can facilitate the spread of the virus by touching the mouth and nose with hands contaminated by the cigarette (PEIXER *et al.*, 2022). It was essential that professionals were updated on information and recommendations and adopted protective measures to prevent transmission and worked together with other areas of health to ensure access to essential treatments (CALEJON, 2021).

The impacts caused by the pandemic on smokers are numerous and worrying, where this global health crisis has brought with it a series of changes in people's routine, which may have directly affected the health of smokers, having also increased the use of electronic cigarettes, among other devices (CHATKIN; GODOY, 2020). E-cigarettes are seen by many as a less harmful alternative to conventional cigarettes, but the truth is that there are still many uncertainties about the long-term effects of using these products (BARUFALDI, 2021).

The use of e-cigarettes can lead many young people to become addicted to nicotine, which is extremely concerning and it is critical that public health authorities intensify awareness campaigns about the risks of smoking and e-cigarette use and warn the population about the dangers of these habits, especially during the pandemic, when health became an even more crucial issue (CAVALCANTE *et al.*, 2020).

Concomitantly, it became important that public health policies include measures to help smokers quit, such as the provision of treatments and supportive therapies. It has also become necessary to establish stricter regulations on the use of electronic cigarettes, to prevent these products



from being marketed indiscriminately and without control (MELO, 2020).

The impacts caused by the pandemic on smokers are worrisome and required urgent measures by public health authorities and raising awareness of the risks of smoking and e-cigarette use and offering support to those who wish to quit smoking has become essential to ensure a healthier life free from the harm caused by tobacco (CASTEDO, 2021).

In this sense, public policies and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 are closely linked to the smoking program. After all, smoking is one of the main risk factors for public health and, therefore, must be addressed with effective public policies (ACHELUS, 2022).

According to Miranda (2023) SDG 3, which deals with health and well-being, has as one of its goals to reduce the number of premature deaths caused by non-communicable diseases, such as lung cancer, which is directly related to smoking. In addition, SDG 12, which deals with sustainable production and consumption, is also linked to tobacco control, since the production and consumption of cigarettes have negative impacts on the environment.

Thus, it is important that public policies aimed at tobacco control are effective and comprehensive, including measures such as increasing taxes on cigarettes, prohibiting tobacco advertising, expanding smoke-free spaces, among others (SANTOS, 2022).

The program aimed at tobacco control, in turn, should offer support so that smokers can quit the addiction, through appropriate treatments and therapies. It is important that this program is aligned with public policies and the 2030 SDGs, in order to contribute to the improvement of public health and the promotion of sustainability (ANDREIS, 2021).

Tobacco control is a global challenge that affects public and individual health, the economy and the environment and to address this problem, a joint effort is needed between society, governments and health professionals together with pharmaceutical assistance being one of the tools available to help smokers quit addiction in the aid of information on smoking cessation drugs, such as nicotine replacement therapy and non-nicotinic medications, which may increase the chances of success in trying to quit smoking (RIBEIRO, 2022).

However, pharmaceutical assistance alone is not enough to control smoking, making it necessary a set of public policies that address the problem on several fronts, such as education, supervision, regulation and health promotion (RECH *et al.*, 2022).

Public policies should also take into account the social and economic inequalities that affect the prevalence of smoking in different population groups and with regard to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals includes the goal of reducing premature mortality from non-communicable diseases such as tobacco-related diseases by one third and to achieve this goal, a coordinated effort is needed among countries to implement effective public policies for tobacco control (CORDEIRO, 2022).



Some of the public policies that have been shown to be effective in controlling tobacco include increasing taxes on tobacco products, banning tobacco advertising and promotion, creating smoke-free environments, clearly labeling tobacco products, and offering smoking cessation services, where these policies should be implemented in an integrated and sustainable manner, with the participation of civil society and health professionals (MIODOWNNIK, 2022).

Tobacco control is a complex challenge that requires a multidisciplinary and integrated approach. Pharmaceutical care is one of the tools available to help smokers quit, but a set of effective public policies is needed to reduce the prevalence of smoking and its impacts on public and individual health. SDG 2030 sets an ambitious target for reducing premature mortality from non-communicable diseases, including tobacco-related diseases. To achieve this goal, a joint effort among countries is needed to implement effective public policies for tobacco control (BESSA, 2023).



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