

Conference Abstract

London Global Cancer Week 2025

24 - 28 Nov 2025

London, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Effectiveness of brief anti-tobacco counselling and cancer awareness in behavioral change among Malayali tribes of South India – An 8 year follow up study

21 Feb 2026

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Background

"Tribals" refers to a group of people who live in isolation in natural, unpolluted surroundings far away from civilization, retaining their traditional values, traditions, beliefs, and myths, and are considered the land's autochthonous people. India has the world's second-highest concentration of tribal people after African countries. This study was carried out to assess tobacco use and cancer awareness and to evaluate the effectiveness of brief tobacco cessation counselling along with motivation and reinforcement among Malayali tribes in Yelagiri Hills, Tamil Nadu, India.

Methods

Following a study in the year 2010 among a population of 660, a larger study with 2185 people was conducted in 2018 in the same Malayali tribes of Yelagiri Hills. Health education and brief tobacco cessation counselling was provided at an interval of every 3 months for 8 years between 2010 and 2018 to this population. Data was gathered using a cross-sectional survey, clinical examination, and a pre-tested questionnaire that contained demographic information and tobacco

habits.

Results

Results in 2018, revealed that 47% of the 2185 study participants had no formal education. Among those who smoked, 29% smoked beedi, 31% smoked cigarettes, 39% chewed raw tobacco, 33% chewed Hans, and 12% used both smoking and smokeless tobacco. Oral mucosal lesions are common. Tobacco use and a lack of understanding about the harmful consequences were found in the study population. However, when compared to 2010, in 2018 there was a reduction in tobacco consumption prevalence among this population (from 45.4% to 32.8%) illustrating the effectiveness of intervention in changing the behavior.

Conclusion

According to the findings of this study, the Malayali tribes were characterised by a lack of understanding about oral health, deeply ingrained dental beliefs, a high rate of tobacco use, and restricted access to health services. The 8-year follow-up and brief tobacco cessation counselling along with motivation and reinforcement have undoubtedly contributed to a decrease in tobacco usage in this community.
