

## LETTER TO EDITOR

# Tobacco Cessation Centres (TCC) – A Welcome Move by the Government of India

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### ARTICLE CYCLE

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Dear Editor,

I write to express my strong support for the recent establishment of Tobacco Cessation Clinics (TCCs) across medical institutions in India, a timely and commendable initiative by the Government of India as part of its Tobacco Free Youth Campaign 2.0. This move represents a crucial step forward in the fight against the tobacco epidemic that continues to claim millions of lives globally, with India accounting for a significant portion of this toll. By integrating TCCs into the healthcare infrastructure, the government is taking a bold, proactive stance to curb tobacco use and reduce the associated burden of disease, especially among the high-risk populations encountered in medical institutions.

The journey toward this initiative began on World No Tobacco Day, May 31, 2024, when the Operational Guidelines for Establishing Tobacco Cessation Centres in Medical Institutions were released by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW). These guidelines provided a detailed framework for the planning, implementation, and scaling up of TCCs within healthcare facilities, particularly in tertiary care hospitals and medical colleges. They outline a clear pathway to addressing

tobacco addiction through a combination of counselling, pharmacotherapy, and behavioural interventions, with the aim of helping individuals quit tobacco and preventing relapses.

On August 16, 2024, the National Medical Commission (NMC) issued a public notice mandating the establishment of TCCs in all medical institutions under its purview, making it clear that these centres must be fully operational by September. Following this announcement, a national webinar was held on August 20, 2024, to orient medical institutions on the steps required to set up these centres. The participation of medical colleges and institutions in this webinar was crucial, as they play a pivotal role in ensuring the successful implementation of TCCs. The inauguration of the TCCs was marked by a virtual event held on September 24, 2024, where the Honourable Union Health Minister officially launched the Tobacco Free Youth Campaign 2.0 and inaugurated the TCCs across the country.

The Operational Guidelines for Establishing Tobacco Cessation Centres provide a comprehensive approach to setting up TCCs, ensuring that they offer not only medical

interventions but also behavioural counselling tailored to the individual needs of tobacco users. These centres are expected to operate with a dedicated team comprising medical officers, counsellors trained in tobacco cessation, and support staff. The guidelines also emphasize the importance of integrating TCCs with other departments such as oncology, cardiology, psychiatry, and respiratory medicine, ensuring that tobacco users receive holistic care. This multidisciplinary approach is critical, especially since tobacco use is a major risk factor for cancers, cardiovascular diseases, and respiratory disorders, among other health conditions.

A particularly commendable aspect of the initiative is its focus on training healthcare professionals. By situating TCCs in medical colleges, the government ensures that future healthcare providers are trained to address tobacco addiction as part of their medical education. This hands-on experience equips medical students, interns, and resident doctors with the skills and knowledge needed to offer effective tobacco cessation support, thus embedding tobacco control into the fabric of India's healthcare system. Moreover, these TCCs provide valuable opportunities for healthcare professionals to stay updated on the latest tobacco cessation techniques through capacity-building programs.

Beyond the medical services offered at TCCs, the guidelines stress the importance of public awareness and community involvement in tobacco cessation. Medical institutions, especially those located in high-risk areas, are encouraged to engage with their surrounding communities, conducting workshops, public awareness campaigns, and cessation drives to inform the public about the dangers of tobacco use and the availability of support services. This community-based approach is essential in reaching a broader audience and ensuring that tobacco cessation services are accessible to all, including those in rural or underserved areas.

Research and data collection are also key components of the TCC initiative. Medical

colleges, being hubs of both healthcare delivery and research, are encouraged to conduct studies on the effectiveness of various tobacco cessation interventions, quit rates, and long-term outcomes. This research will contribute to the growing body of evidence on best practices for tobacco cessation and can inform both national and global tobacco control policies. Additionally, medical institutions are urged to collaborate with national programs such as the National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP) and international organizations like the WHO to share best practices and leverage technical support.

The government's move to establish TCCs also addresses the challenges that have historically hindered tobacco cessation efforts in India. Cultural acceptance of tobacco use, lack of awareness among users, and difficulties in maintaining long-term cessation are all significant barriers that TCCs aim to overcome. The guidelines propose solutions such as multi-sectoral collaboration, greater involvement of local governments, and incentivizing healthcare providers to offer cessation services. Furthermore, the government's commitment to sustainability ensures that TCCs will receive the necessary funding and support to continue their operations in the long term, with a goal of expanding the network of TCCs to every state and union territory.

Of particular note is the role of medical colleges in the successful implementation of TCCs. These institutions, which serve as both educational centres and clinical service providers, are ideally positioned to integrate tobacco cessation services into routine healthcare. Medical colleges encounter a large number of patients suffering from tobacco-related illnesses, and the presence of TCCs allows these institutions to offer comprehensive care to these patients. Additionally, by involving medical students and healthcare workers in the operations of TCCs, medical colleges can ensure that tobacco cessation becomes a core component of healthcare delivery in the future. The

multidisciplinary collaboration between departments such as oncology, cardiology, and psychiatry further enhances the ability of medical colleges to offer holistic tobacco cessation support, addressing both the medical and psychological aspects of addiction.

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the establishment of Tobacco Cessation Centres (TCCs) across medical institutions is a landmark initiative that reflects the Government of India's commitment to tackling the tobacco epidemic. By providing structured support to individuals seeking to quit tobacco, integrating cessation services into medical education, and fostering public awareness, the government is making significant strides toward reducing the burden of tobacco-related diseases in India. This initiative is not just a welcome move; it is a necessary one for safeguarding the health of future generations. The success of TCCs will depend on sustained effort, continued public and institutional engagement, and a long-term commitment to creating a tobacco-free India.

### FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND SPONSORSHIP

Nil

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest.

### DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the preparation of this work, the author has used AI (Chat GPT – 4) to rephrase some of the segments of this article. After using this tool, the author has reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication

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