

Assalaamu alaykum

Dear IMANA Members and JIMA Readers:

This is the first issue of this year. It contains varied and interesting articles, including a report by Dr. Sayeed on an IMANA-sponsored study on the smoking patterns of Muslims from New York and surrounding areas. Unfortunately, American Muslims are not immune to this harmful practice despite Islam's teachings against it and the various resources available for U.S. residents to learn about the dangers of smoking cigarettes, the use of hooka / shisha and other tobacco products, and the availability of cessation methods and resources detailed in this article. The good news is that the prevalence of smoking, even as high as it is, is lower than the percentage for all Americans, which is estimated to be about 30%. The survey conducted by Nafis Salaam also showed Muslims in New York had a high exposure to second-hand smoking. In addition, it showed the participants' interest in mosque-based tobacco education, which suggests the need for partnership between health-care providers and community religious institutions in conducting antismoking initiatives.

In an editorial I wrote to accompany this article, I discussed the significant decline in smoking prevalence in the United States and new developments, such as the legalization of smoke-free premises in public sites; the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, which gave the Federal Drug Administration authority to regulate the tobacco industry; and the introduction of oral smoking products that may have lower risks. Nevertheless, smoking is still the leading cause of avoidable mortality and morbidity in the United States. Unfortunately, this decline in smoking prevalence in the United States was offset by an increase in smoking rates in developing countries, including Muslim-majority countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, Kuwait, Pakistan, and Malaysia. This is due in part to multinational tobacco companies, wary of legal suits and concerned about the decreasing demand and profit in the United States and other developed countries, focusing their marketing strategy on the developing

world, where there is a lack of antismoking campaigns and absence, to a large extent, of any governmental oversight. The World Health Organization recognizing this pandemic, which is especially detrimental to the developing world, negotiated the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control treaty to curtail the increase in global prevalence.

Another harmful behavior, drug abuse, is discussed in an article by Drs. M.K. Hasan and O.K. Hasan. They specifically discuss opiate addiction and prescription drug abuse. They report that approximately 14% of American adults are using pain medications (opioids) for nonmedical purposes. They discuss the cavalier approach of many physicians in the prescription of opioids without strong indication and without careful follow up. Also, there is a small minority of unscrupulous physicians who for financial gain prescribe these medications indiscriminately. The authors discuss the impact of this "epidemic" and propose methods to curtail it and to treat addicted patients.

Dr. Rathor and his colleagues from Malaysia discuss the concept of autonomy, one of the four principles of medical ethics. They compare the secular vs. the Islamic interpretation of this principle. They opine that there are certain cases where strict adherence to the principle of autonomy may actually adversely affect the patient and contradict beneficence, another principle of medical ethics. The Islamic model allows and sometimes encourages the involvement of the family and or the physician to participate in making the appropriate health-care decision along with the patient. They provide arguments to support their view.

Dr. Arawi in a previous JIMA issue discussed the ethics of the Muslim physician as guided by the teachings of the Qur'an. In this issue she discusses how the Muslim physician guided by Prophet Muhammad's Sunna will be a virtuous physician, giving the patient his due rights, treating him with honesty and respect, and gaining his trust.

In this issue we publish another article about Islamic rulings on abortion. It stresses the Islamic guideline based on which abortion is permitted under limited circumstances, that is when a certain

benefit to the mother outweighs the harm of ending the life or potential life of the fetus. It is heartwarming that Muslims who constitute a small minority in a small faraway country (New Zealand) still want to adhere to Islamic principles in their lives.

Dr. Faroque Khan reviewed the Honeybee Democracy, a book by T.D. Seeley. It is intriguing to note the “democratic” process by which honeybees conduct their affairs. Dr. Seeley shows how human societies could improve their decision-making process by adopting some of the methods honeybees employ. Dr. Khan also elaborates on the Qur’anic verses describing bees. He notes that the verses use the mode of conjugation in the Arabic language intended for the female gender knowing now that the actively working bees are females.

As usual in JIMA we profile one of our eminent physicians. In this issue it is Dr. Muhammad Asim Khan. He has been afflicted with ankylosing spondylitis since he was a medical student, which caused severe physical disabilities and other health problems. Nevertheless, he continued his medical training and achieved great professional success. He is an accomplished teacher, clinician, and researcher with great many publications. On a personal level, he continues to have an outstanding optimistic cheerful

and positive outlook on life.

We are now posting JIMA articles online once they have been finalized and before they are printed. You can read these online at jima.imana.org before you receive your JIMA in the mail.

You can also follow JIMA on Twitter at @JIslamMedAssoc. If you do not use Twitter, you can receive weekly updates by e-mail by visiting <http://paper.li/JIslamMedAssoc>.

Finally, as you know this year’s conference will be in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on July 15-21. I again ask that while submitting an abstract for presentation at this conference, you begin working on the manuscript for publication in JIMA.

See you in San Juan in sha Allah.

Wassalaam,

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