GUEST EDITORIAL

SMOKELESS TOBACCO – AN OTHER SIDE



"Smokeless tobacco is safer than smoking," an alarming news appeared in Free Press Journal August 1, 2009 on page 6 under column 'the other side' with peg from Washington. The statement is based on the findings of Peter Lee and Jan Hamling from P.N. Lee statistics and computing Ltd. Of Britain, who carried out the analysis of 89 studies from the United States and Scandanavia. They found that after adjustment for concurrent smoking any effect of current US products or Scandanavian products seems very limited. According to Lee "That any effect of smokeless tobacco on risk of cancer, if it exist at all is quantitatively very much smaller than the known effect of smoking. Lee claimed that their paper shows clearly that in marked contrast to smoking smokeless tobacco use, carries little or no risk of cancer.

Such a news item appearing in Indian daily prominently, in favour of smokeless tobacco products needs to be pondered, while enough have been said and published with evidence based studies in India about carcinogenecity effects of smokeless tobacco in different forms including chewing tobacco products and the snuff. The other side of statements and claims made by Peter Lee and Jan Hamling need to deliberated contrast to available Indian studies.

Could the medical journalism and health promoting bodies of India react to such dogmatic statements/claims made on the basis of studies from US or Scandanavia whose smokeless tobacco products consumption is not much in vogue as compared to the quantum consumed in India.

Such statement of Peter Lee and Jan Hamling on smokeless tobacco would further add to the controversy on known ill effect of tobacco products and would go as another ad in favour of smokeless tobacco products.

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