

Review of: "Signboards prohibiting tobacco sale within 100 yards of educational institutes: The appraisal of prohibition compliance and on-ground status of the COTPA Act, 2003 in Chanakyapuri Division of New Delhi Revenue District, the administrative precinct of India."

Rahul Jindal

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Singh has investigated the compliance in connection with the anti-tobacco law in India, specifically in the Chanakyapuri division of the New Delhi. He firstly checked whether educational institutes have a sign post prohibiting sale of tobacco products within 100 yards of the premises and next, if the sale of tobacco products was within 100 yards of school premises.. He found that compliance with the law was very lax, less than half of all the educational institutes had a board prohibiting smoking within 100 yards. It was indeed surprising that the law was not enforced even in the heart of the administrative region of India.

While this is not a unique study as the author points out that similar studies have been carried out in other cities of India, namely Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Mohali, Vadodara and Chennai City. The authors state that this study is unique as it is in the heart of India's capital city.

It is also noteworthy that the sale of tobacco products was carried out in temporary shacks which may be difficult to regulate.

The author has also made an interesting observation that several instances in which metres was used instead of yards and this yardstick could be used in courts as defense, although I don't see any specific court cases cited by the author (100 yards is around 91 metres). Any amendment to the law should take this into consideration.

The author recommends that COPTA act of 2003 (prohibition of advertisement and regulation of trade and commerce, production, supply and distribution) should be strengthened and all stakeholders must play an active role to protect the health of young Indians studying in schools and colleges.

Suggestions:

1. I would like to see if the author has specific recommendations to amend the laws already on the books.
2. I would like to see if similar studies have been carried out in other low and middle income countries in comparable circumstances. If so, it would be helpful to create a table and summarize the findings.
3. The author recommends that to save young adults, the compliance of COTPA, 2003, must be made strict and offenders punished severely. However, it may be impossible or very difficult to regulate temporary shacks which can simply move to another location. Therefore, education on the adverse effects of smoking to all stakeholders is necessary rather than mere implementation of the law.
4. The author needs to give the reader data on the implementation of the law, for example, how many prosecutions and were brought within the district under study in New Delhi. If there were indeed prosecutions, the author needs to state the amount of fines imposed and how many were repeat offenders.
5. Why not involve reputable NGOs, given that the law enforcement may be difficult as the police has to deal with many other civil and criminal activities,