

# **A STUDY OF AWARENESS AND PERCEPTION OF TOBACCO CONTROL AND SMOKING HEALTH RISKS IN A UNIVERSITY SAMPLE**

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**Background:** The World Health Organization (WHO, 2009) states that tobacco use as one of the biggest public health threats the world has ever faced. It kills more than five million people a year an average of one person every six seconds. According to the World Health Organization, tobacco use accounts for one in ten adult deaths and up to half of its current users will eventually die of a tobacco related disease.

**Objective:** Tobacco use continues to kill more than 5 million people worldwide each year, and this number is expected to grow. The burden of tobacco use is greatest in low- and middle-income countries. The objective of this study is to evaluate student perception and awareness of the tobacco control act and health risks due to smoking.

**Design:** A survey was conducted on a convenient sample of one hundred participants from the University of the West Indies, St Augustine campus. Students partook in the study during November 2009. A questionnaire was administered to participants which included - demographics, attitudes, perception and awareness of smoking health effects.

**Results:** Most participants of the study were aware of the tobacco control act as well as the majority was in support of the ban of smoking in public places. 89% of the total population was aware of the health risks associated with smoking.

**Conclusion:** The study shows there was a high awareness of the tobacco control act among this sample population which may be related to demographic factors of age group and educational level.