

Part of an interview with a man, 65 years old- about tobacco smoking

Researcher (R): Well, as I told you previously, I would like to talk to you about your experiences and thoughts of tobacco smoking. I know that you have recently stopped smoking. So please, tell me how it happened that you stopped?

Informant (I): Well, you see, I don't feel so good right now and my doctor told me that I must stop smoking. You see, I have planned to stop so many times and even tried to stop at least five times before this, but it has always failed in some way. I have known for a long, long time that it is bad and dangerous to smoke, but still I haven't been able to stop. It is just so hard to quit.

R: What are the difficulties?

I: Well, as a matter of fact, in the beginning I didn't really want to stop (coughs). I thought it was rather nice and cool to smoke.

R: In what ways did you think it was nice and cool?

I: When I was 15 years old I started to smoke together with my friends and we had a lot of fun and went out to dance halls and pubs. There was always a lot of drinking and smoking going around and it always made me feel very good (coughs). The girls were very interested and they also smoked a lot. It was a way of being together, it's just that..... And we behaved just as they did in the movies at that time. The movie stars always smoked in the films. We never thought of it as being risky in any way.

R: When then did you start thinking of it as a risk?

I: It must have been in the seventies..... or the eighties, well, I don't remember. Anyway it was when they all started debating about it in the newspapers, about lung cancer and all that stuff..... (sighs). I realised that the best thing for me must be to stop, but at that time there was not so much talk about it among ordinary people. Everybody smoked everywhere. Nowadays you aren't allowed to smoke anywhere. This has just become too ridiculous. People can't do what they want anymore without the government telling them how to behave.

R: What is your opinion about tobacco smoking today?

I: It was foolish of me to start in the first place. And now when I'm not feeling well I do not really know what is the cause of my illness and it worries me. Of course, I know it could be something dangerous, but I have only myself to blame by being so stupid that I ever started. Because once you are addicted it is extremely hard to quit.

R: We know that many young people start smoking nowadays – especially young women. How do you think a good prevention programme for these young people should be designed for them to be influenced by the message?

I: Well, I don't know..... It is hard to just inform people, 'cause all people know about the dangers. But I think maybe that the most effective way is to let them see and meet people who have become sick of tobacco smoking. Then they would be afraid to get the same. Or maybe to talk about how cigarettes affect the breathing and the looks. Young women want to look good and smoking makes them look older and the teeth are affected and so on But honestly, I am not at all sure that such a programme would have any effect at all. They would rather think that it is not something that concerns them.