

## COMPARATIVE SOCIO-CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF SMOKING BEHAVIOR AND DIFFICULTY OF QUITTING SMOKING IN JAPAN AND THAILAND

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**Objective** Although education for smoking cessation is being conducted in Asian countries, the prevalence of smoking is still high. The present study was designed to clarify differences in the socio-cultural background in Japan and Thailand.

**Methods** Cross-sectional study. The Japan survey was conducted in Kanagawa and the Thailand survey in Suphanburi. Questionnaires written in English were translated into each language. The subjects were out-patients of community hospitals (331 males and 353 females in Japan and 293 males and 288 females in Thailand).

**Results** The prevalence of smoking was found to be higher in Thailand than in Japan for males but almost the same for females. A higher percentage of the subjects quit smoking in Japan than in Thailand. The motive for quitting smoking was "awareness of the harmful effects of smoking" in both countries, but "told by others to quit smoking" was also often encountered in Thailand. The method of quitting was most frequently "suppress the urge to smoke by will power" in both countries. Nicotine replacement therapy is not well known yet in either country.

**Conclusion** Smoking behavior was different although the difficulty of quitting smoking was common to both countries. The prevalence of smoking in younger males and females was established to be higher in Japan, and social and environmental regulations for quitting smoking were effective in Thailand. It suggests that such regulations should be made stricter in Japan. Enlightenment by providing knowledge may be particularly useful in Thailand.

**Key words** : smoking behavior, quitting smoking, international comparative study, socio-cultural analysis, education of smoking cessation, difficulty of quitting smoking

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