Letter to the Editor

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Hookah use and COVID-19

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Halk sağlığı açısından riskleri azaltmak için COVID-19'un sosyal ortamlarda bulaşını en aza indirmek gerekmektedir. Nagile içilen ortamların da kontrol altına alınması bulaş riskinin azalması açısından faydalı olacaktır.

In terms of public health it is necessary to control the social environments in order to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. Controlling hookah smoking environments will be essential for reducing the risk of transmission.

2019-nCoV, a novel coronavirus was identified as the cause of a group of pneumonia cases in Wuhan, China at the end of 2019 and the infection rapidly spread throughout the world [1]. The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) as a public health emergency of international concern and characterizes COVID-19 as a pandemic on 11 March 2020 [2].

The COVID-19 pandemic in Turkey became part of the ongoing worldwide pandemic. The disease has reached Turkey on 11 March 2020 and it was confirmed that it had spread all over Turkey by 1 April. The first death due to COVID-19 occurred on 15 March 2020 [3].

Tobacco use may increase the risk of suffering from serious symptoms due to COVID-19. Smoking may increase the adverse health problems like being admitting to intensive care units, requiring mechanical ventilation and suffering severe health consequences in COVID-19 patients [4].

Hookah (shisha, narghila or waterpipe) is an instrument used for smoking flavoured substances like cannabis, tobacco and opium. It is popular in the India, the Arabian peninsula, Kenya, South Africa, Turkey, United States and Canada [5].

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Like smoking, hookah use may exacerbate the risk for severe COVID-19 through shared use. It is difficult to clean the long pipes and also having a cold water reservoir they are ideal for transmission of SARS-CoV-2 [1]. Social gatherings may also provide an opportunity for the spread of the virus [4].

After our hospital was appointed as a pandemic hospital, the application to our hospital with suspicion of COVID-19 increased. Patients who were COVID-19 PCR test positive and/or had clinical and radiological findings were hospitalized. Among these hospitalized patients, there was a family with four members (aged 28, 29, 62 and 65 years) and a friend of one of 29 year old son. When the risk factors of transmission of the virus were examined, it was noticed that the young man and his friend used a hookah within the last week. Fortunately, all members of the family were treated and discharged.

Due to the public health risks of COVID-19 transmission, several countries have already restricted hookah use. Based on the advice from the World Health Organization on COVID-19 and hookah use, it is essential to get the hookah use under control to prevent COVID-19 spread through hookah smoking [4].

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