

Philip Morris sees 6 mn US smokers switching to IQOS device if cleared

Heart attack risk high with one cigarette a day

PARIS, Jan 25, (Agencies): Just one cigarette a day carries nearly half the risk for heart attack and stroke as smoking a full pack of 20, according to a large-scale study published Thursday.

"If someone smokes one cigarette instead of 20 per day, intuitively we'd think that the risk drops to 1/20, or five percent," said lead author Allan Hackshaw, a professor at University College London, whose paper analysed 141 previous studies.

"This seems to be the case for lung cancer, but is not true for heart attacks and stroke, where one cigarette per day carries around 50 percent of the risk of a pack a day," he told AFP.

Smokers should not be fooled, in other words, into thinking that a few cigarettes a day — or even just one — carries little or no long term harm, he added.

"Whilst it is great that smokers try to cut down — and they should be positively encouraged to do so — in order to get the big benefits on cardiovascular disease they need to quit completely," he said by email.

The findings were published in the medical journal BMJ.

Tobacco kills about seven million people worldwide every year, according to the World Health Organization.

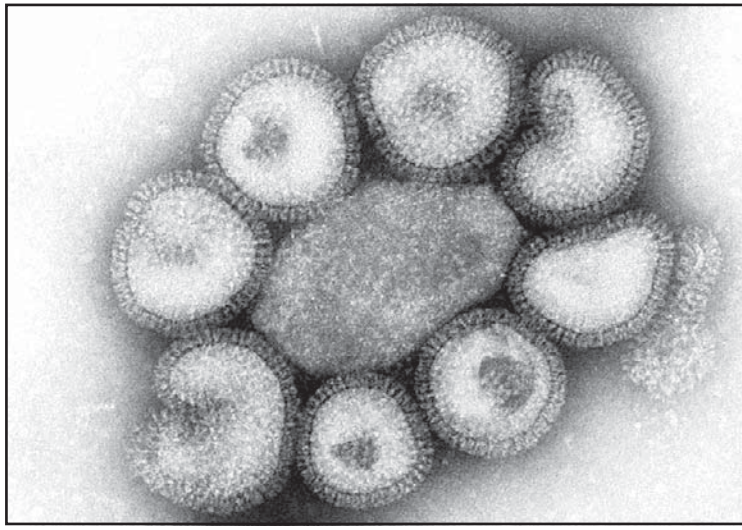
About two million of those deaths are due to cardiovascular disease, mainly coronary heart attacks and stroke.

Earlier research suggested that smoking a few cigarettes a day was linked to a higher-than-expected risk of heart disease, but findings were inconclusive.

Strokes

To probe deeper, a team of scientists led by Hackshaw analysed the results of 141 studies, estimating the relative risk of one, five or 20 cigarettes a day.

They found that men who lit up once a day had 46 percent of the excess risk



This 1973 electron microscope image made available by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows influenza virus particles. (AP)

of heart disease associated with smoking a full pack a day, much higher than expected. For strokes, the excess risk was 41 percent.

For reasons that are not fully understood, the risk for women was somewhat smaller — 31 and 34 percent, respectively.

"It could be a mixture of biological difference and differences in lifestyle," said Hackshaw.

Overall, long-term smoking shortens life expectancy by 12-15 years.

"This well conducted study confirms what epidemiologists have suspected but few among the public have," commented University of Oxford professor Paul Aveyard, who was not involved in the research.

"The implication is obvious — anyone who smokes should stop."

At the same time, he added, it would

be wrong to conclude that cutting down is useless.

"There is more reason to believe that lower cigarette consumption will reduce the risk of chronic lung disease and lung cancer, the other two big causes of early death from smoking," he said via Britain's Science Media Centre.

Also:

WASHINGTON: Philip Morris International Inc told a US advisory panel on Wednesday that it expects around 6 million smokers to switch completely to its IQOS electronic tobacco device if the company is allowed to claim it is less risky than cigarettes.

The sleek, penlike IQOS device heats tobacco but does not burn it. The company hopes to convince the US Food and Drug Administration advisory panel that the product contains few

Risk 6 times higher in week post-flu Flu increases heart attack risk in elderly

NEW YORK, Jan 25, (Agencies): As if the flu wasn't bad enough already: Researchers have confirmed that flu sharply increases the risk of heart attack for older people.

Doctors have long known that flu can trigger heart problems. It's one of the reasons flu shots are recommended for nearly everyone.

A new Canadian study found that risk was six times higher in the first week after flu is diagnosed, compared to the year before and after the bug hits. Unlike previous studies, the researchers used lab tests to make sure people suspected of having the flu really did.

"It's a much more rigorous study that allows us to make a much more specific link between flu infection and heart issues," said Richard Webby, a prominent flu researcher at St Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis. He was not involved in the research.

Results were published Wednesday in the New England Journal of Medicine.

The researchers reviewed more than five years of hospital and lab records in Ontario. They found 332 mostly elderly people who had a positive flu test and had suffered a heart attack within a year. There was one strong pattern: 20 had a heart attack within a week of getting the flu. Six died.

"The increased risk was only in that first week," said lead author Dr. Jeffrey Kwong of the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences in Toronto.

How does flu — a respiratory ailment with a fever, cough and aches — trigger a heart attack?

Flu can cause swelling or inflammation in the coronary arteries, which can shake loose plaque and cause blockages, cutting off blood flow.

"That's the main culprit," said Dr. Mohammad Madjid, a cardiologist and flu researcher at Houston's University of Texas Health Science Center.

Adding to that is the strain that flu and other viral infections place on already-weakened hearts. Lung infections make it harder for people to breathe, so the heart has to pump harder to get oxygenated blood out to every part of the body.

Flu wasn't the only viral infection that fell into the same week pattern, the study found. The researchers found the risk of heart attack was about 3 1/2 times higher with respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV, and nearly 3 times higher for a grab bag collection of germs that include the common cold.

The risk of heart attack — or myocardial infarction — is particularly acute in older adults, said the report in the New England of Medicine.

er harmful chemicals than cigarettes and reduces the risk of smoking-related diseases for smokers who switch.

The panel will discuss the company's application for two days and on Thursday will vote on whether the company's data supports one of three potential "modified risk" claims that would be used on the product's label and in marketing.

The vote is not binding but will influence the FDA's decision.

Electronic cigarettes currently on the market use a nicotine-laced liquid. Most toxic chemicals in cigarette smoke are produced when tobacco combusts.

IQOS is used by nearly 4 million people in 30 markets outside the United States but needs FDA authorization to be marketed in America.

Philip Morris says IQOS produces up to 95 percent fewer potentially harmful chemicals than regular cigarettes. The company said if 15 percent of US daily smokers switched completely to IQOS it would translate to about 6 million smokers over seven to 10 years. The figure does not include smokers who might use IQOS in addition to cigarettes.

Moirá Gilchrist, Philip Morris' vice-president of scientific and public

communications, estimated that 90,000 smoking-related deaths could have been averted over 20 years based on an assumed switch rate of 15 percent.

The panel's discussion comes amid an intense debate over the potential risks and benefits associated with e-cigarettes. On Tuesday, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, summarizing data from hundreds of scientific studies, said e-cigarettes are safer than cigarettes and help smokers quit. But the report also found "substantial evidence" that youths who use e-cigarettes are more likely to try traditional cigarettes.

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