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Filipinos in WHO's list of top smokers

A study by the World Health Organization shows the Philippines continues to have one of the highest rates of smoking in Asia despite the government's efforts to get Filipinos to quit smoking.

The Philippines is ranked in the top 15 countries worldwide with the highest burden of tobacco-related illnesses. The country loses nearly P270 million in tobacco-usage related costs, which includes healthcare and productivity loss from illnesses and mortality. More than 100,000 Filipinos die annually from smoking-related diseases, such as lung cancer and heart failure.

The Department of Health refers to continued tobacco dependence as a "key development issue that impacts the well-being, productivity and overall quality of life."

These alarming statistics have triggered a growing number of medical practitioners and civic organizations to appeal for wider access to electronic nicotine delivery systems which are said to be 95-percent less harmful than conventional cigarettes, according to a study commissioned by Public Health England.

Results of recent research published by the New England Journal of Medicine concluded that e-cigarettes were more effective in helping smokers quit compared to nicotine replacement therapy products such as nicotine patches, gums, and lozenges.

The study assessed close to 900 individuals that sought support from the UK National Health Service for smoking cessation. After one year, 18 percent of e-cigarette users had successfully quit smoking compared to 9.9 percent of those using NRTs.