

## Letter to Editor

### Contradictions galore

Sir,

It was so disheartening to note that just in front of the main APICON-2011 (Annual Conference of the Association of Physicians of India, 2011) gate at Ahmedabad there was a "gutkha" paan masala shop selling the gutkha and paan masala sachets to conference delegates and supporting staff. That umpteen number of people were consuming this deadly material was reflected by the empty gutkha sachets strewn in the exhibition hall and near toilet points. There was bigger surprise in store during lunch hours. The vegetables were dripping with oily and spicy materials. God only knew whether they contained pure and natural ingredients. To top it, the sweet dish included 'halwa' (porridge) having abundant ghee and sugar in it, 'gulab jamun' which was no more a natural black plum as the name suggested but a cooked sweet preparation containing 'maida' (soft milled flour) & 'khoya' impregnated with concentrated sugar and not to forget 'jalebi'-a soft jelly like circular preparation of maida solution which is fermented and later on deep fried in oil and soaked in concentrated solution of sugar. Mind you many of the consumers were in their late fifties or early sixties. Who bothers for atherosclerosis [1], although the very German name "atheroma" means 'porridge' like lesion.

In a similar international meet on atherosclerosis at Bangalore where a thread-bare discussion was held on atherosclerosis and the reasons why too many young Indians are falling prey to coronary artery disease prematurely; tobacco and faulty diets were incriminated to be the prime suspects. Surprisingly, the food served was anything but full of cream and atherogenic stuff. The sumptuous sweet dish again comprised of 'jalebi' and 'gulabjamuns'. Moreover, small balls of areca nut and sugar coated fennel were offered as mouth fresheners. Knowing pretty well the cytotoxic, carcinogenic, fibrotic and diabetogenic property of areca nut, it seemed to be an anticlimax of atherosclerosis conference.

It may appear that a mountain is being made out of a mole hill. But what about those guys who are academicians of repute and take gutkha and paan masala in front of their students and patients. Some

will take a break during meetings to go to toilet only to consume gutkha and then rejoin the discussions. The mystery of their earlier break gets unravelled the moment they open their mouth and display their tobacco stained mutilated teeth spraying fountains of saliva containing micro-particles of gutkha and areca nut on near-by listeners. It is another matter that they would be teaching their students the addictive and cardiotoxic properties of tobacco containing preparations.

There is talk of the expanding waist line as a marker of insulin resistance. Unfortunately, in any scientific congregation of doctors, all grades of central obesity are visible. It indicates that doctors are neglecting themselves by shunning exercise and resorting to inappropriate diet. Alcohol is another thorny issue with its strong proponents and opponents. But alcohol in large quantities is detrimental to heart giving rise to hypertension, cardiomyopathy, stroke and coronary artery disease. But, scientific meetings sponsored by industrial houses have 'cocktail' as a prime menu to attract large number of participants. Stressed as we are in the present day hurly burly life; it is important to practice destressing, relaxation or meditation techniques. Knowing pretty well the significant role played by tobacco, diet, alcohol and stress in prevention of cardiovascular diseases and diabetes, is it not a 'contradiction galore' that we practice just the opposite in personal and public life?

### References

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