

4 Health professionals

"The role and image of the health professional are essential in promoting tobacco-free lifestyles and cultures."
World Health Organization, 2005

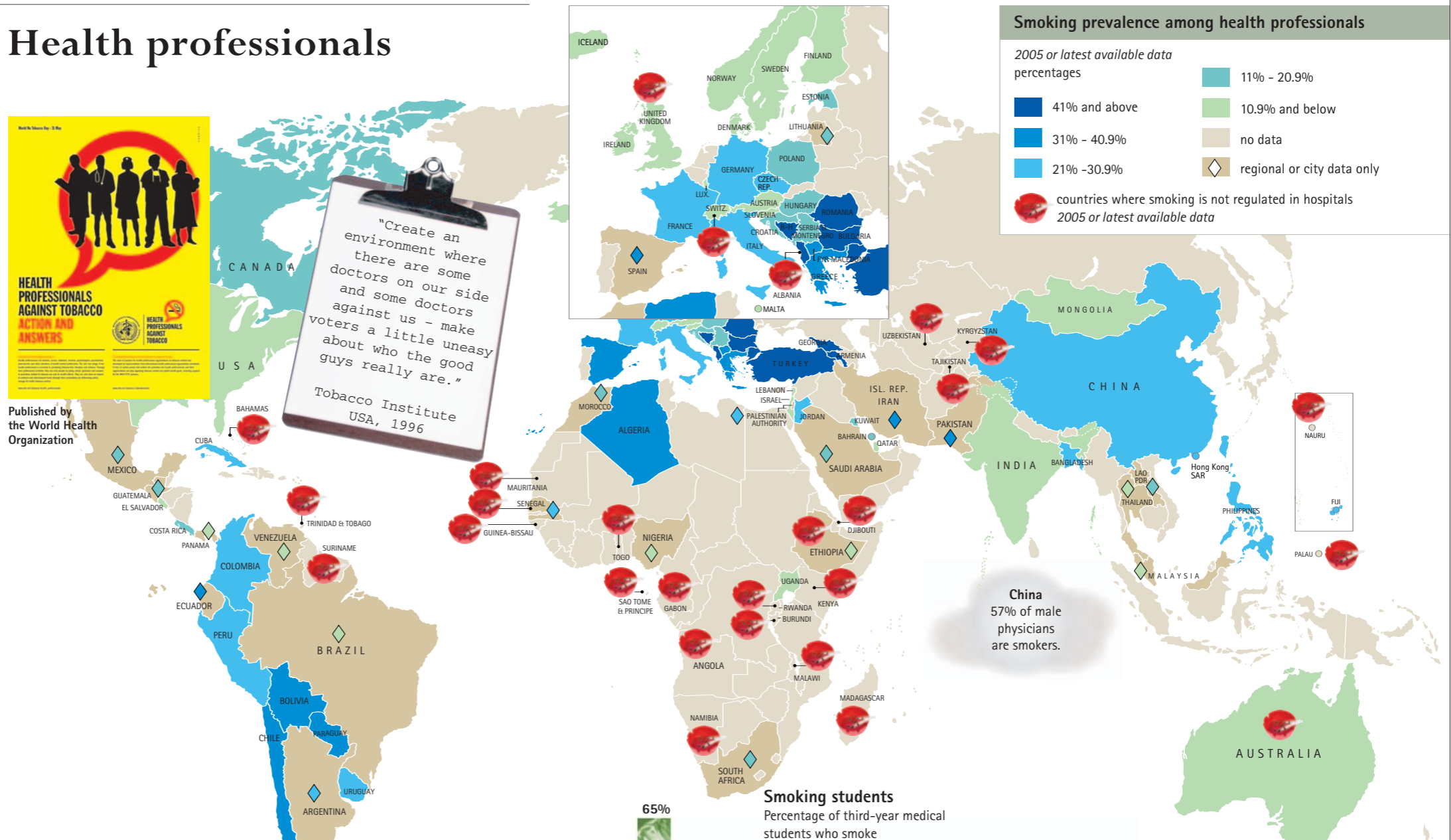
Whether in the doctor's office, the dentist's chair, or over the pharmacy counter, health professionals have a unique opportunity to counsel individuals on why and how to stop smoking. Even brief advice from a health professional can have a significant impact on smoking cessation rates. However, health professionals who smoke are less likely to help their patients quit smoking and their advice has diminished credibility.

Health-professional smoking prevalence varies widely around the world, reflecting socio-demographic patterns of tobacco use. In early stages of the pandemic, higher status individuals and social trendsetters, such as health professionals, tend to exhibit markedly higher smoking prevalence rates than the general population. In later stages of the pandemic, health professionals – direct observers of the terrible health consequences of long-term smoking – often quit smoking and initiate national tobacco-control movements.

In 2004, a WHO meeting of health professional organizations adopted a code of practice describing 14 ways medical associations could support tobacco control. By quitting their own addiction, becoming proficient at smoking cessation counselling, and by engaging in social and political action against tobacco, health professionals can contribute to reducing tobacco's escalating toll of death and disability.



Published by the World Health Organization



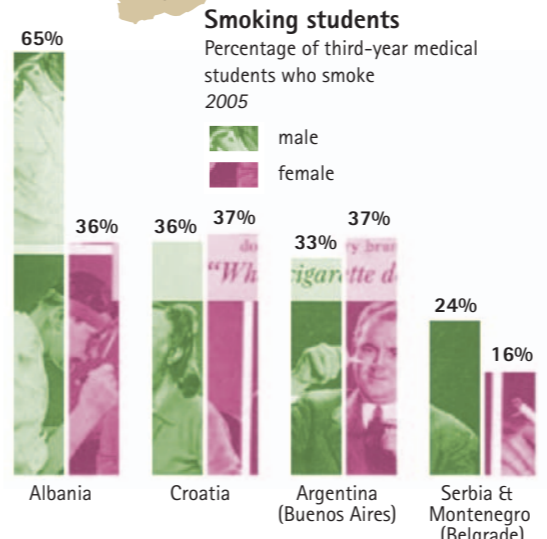
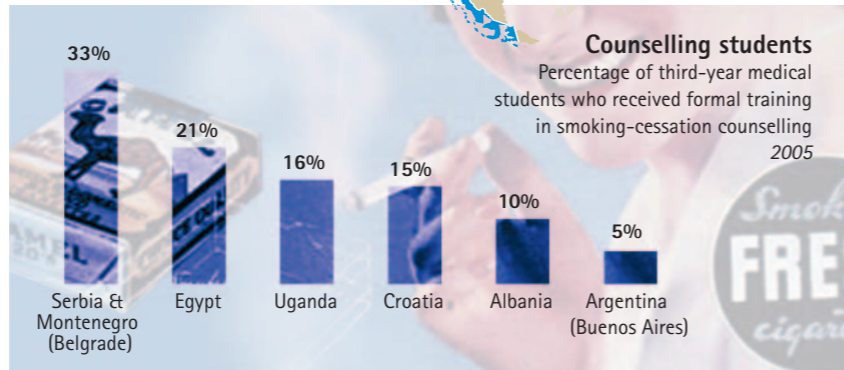
Smoking prevalence among health professionals

2005 or latest available data percentages

- 41% and above
- 31% - 40.9%
- 21% - 30.9%
- 11% - 20.9%
- 10.9% and below
- no data
- regional or city data only

countries where smoking is not regulated in hospitals 2005 or latest available data

China
57% of male physicians are smokers.



RJ Reynolds exploited the position of health professionals as role models in their early advertisements. By not smoking themselves, health professionals can be a compelling example to their communities.