

forming, toxin-producing, Gram-positive bacillus that is ubiquitous in the environment and small numbers of organisms are frequently present in foods². *B. cereus* is a well-known cause of gastrointestinal illness following ingestion of heavily contaminated foods³. Spores of *B. cereus* are heat resistant. Since the organism is able to grow over a wide range of temperatures (25-42°C), it can multiply in large numbers in cooked foods that are held at improper temperatures. In food companies where food is prepared several hours before consumption and held at room temperature, there is ample opportunity for an outbreak of food-poisoning due to this organism. In the present outbreak, it was not possible to determine whether the cause was *B. cereus* for two reasons: 1) stool specimens were not specifically cultured for *B. cereus*; and 2) no food was available for testing by the time the investigation was begun. These are common problems in the investigation of food-borne outbreaks that often lead to inconclusive results and recommendations. The efficiency of such investigations can be greatly improved by 1) training field and laboratory investigators of food-borne outbreaks in the proper collection, transportation, and testing of specimens; and 2) early reporting of suspected cases of food-poisoning to health authorities.

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Smoking Attitudes and Behavior Among Taipei Junior and Senior Highschool Students

In December 1984, a survey of smoking attitudes and behavior was conducted by guidance counselors at Ta Chi Junior Highschool in Taipei. The school's enrollment is 2,548 and all students (ages 12 to 15 years) are male. Five hundred twenty-two students were randomly selected to complete an anonymous questionnaire. Results showed that 38.7% of students had tried smoking at least once (29.6%, 38.5% and 49.0% of students age 12-13, 14 and 15 years respectively). Of these, 12.3% are current smokers (2.8%, 13.2% and 21.7% of students age 12-13, 14, and 15 years respectively). Of students who had tried smoking, the majority (64.9%) had their first smoking experience while in elementary school. "Curiosity" was the principle motivation (76.5%). Students who are current smokers, on the average, smoke 6.2 cigarettes per week; however, 17.2% of current smokers smoke over one pack of cigarettes per week. Almost half (45.0%) of students who currently smoke said they smoke most often at home rather than at playgrounds or school. While the proportion of students among regular and advanced classes who had tried smoking was approximately equal, the proportion of current smokers in the advanced classes was only about one sixth that in the regular classes (4.9% com-

pared to 31.6%).

In a similar survey of senior highschool students in Taipei ages 16-18 years, an average of 28.2% of students had tried smoking at least once.¹ In contrast to the junior high-school students, smoking was inversely associated with grade (more students in lower grades smoked than in higher grades). Sociological factors associated with smoking included poor scores in school and family members or close friends who also smoke. (Reported by CM Lin, SL Chang, FC Chien, SH Kuo, Guidance Counselors, Ta Chi Junior Highschool; and by SY Ji, Health Education Supervisor, Taipei City Health Dept.)

Editorial note: In Taiwan, lung cancer mortality rates more than doubled during the period 1969-1981.² The evidence that smoking causes lung cancer is overwhelming. There is also evidence to suggest that individuals who start smoking at an early age become heavy smokers and few become regular smokers if they have not started smoking by age 20.³

To address this problem, the Tung Foundation (a private non-profit organization) has developed educational programs which are currently being implemented in Taipei City junior highschools. The program includes video tape demonstrations of the health effects of smoking as well as lectures and written materials. The Tung Foundation eventually plans to make their program available throughout the island. This program fills a critical need in Taiwan, and deserves the support of both school officials and parents. The *Epidemiology Bulletin* welcomes reports of investigations on smoking behavior and encourages the development of smoking prevention programs.

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