

# Clearing the air: Overcoming obstacles in the fight against smoking

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## SUMMARY

Tobacco use remains a global health challenge, causing millions of deaths and diseases each year. This presentation explores obstacles and strategies in the fight against tobacco. High smoking prevalence is deeply rooted in societal norms, necessitating comprehensive efforts to shift attitudes through education and targeted interventions. The influential tobacco industry employs aggressive tactics, requiring robust regulations, enforcement, and graphic warnings. Financial considerations, such as affordability, hinder progress and can be addressed by increasing taxes and funding cessation programs. Political commitment is vital, with strong policies and leadership prioritizing public health over industry interests. International collaboration facilitates knowledge sharing and strengthens the collective voice against tobacco. By changing attitudes, countering industry tactics, addressing finances, fostering political commitment, and promoting collaboration, we can strive for a smoke-free society and improved public health.

# Mental health landscape and way forward in Malaysia

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## SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed unprecedented challenges to our healthcare systems, with significant impacts on individual's mental health. WHO estimates that depression and anxiety has increased by more than 25% since the pandemic began. Malaysia has taken significant strides to bolster our mental health services. The establishment of the National Mental Health Promotion Advisory Council since 2011 has shown a high commitment of leadership governance in addressing the mental health agenda. In addition, the Ministry of Health has also taken the effort to develop the National Strategic Plan for Mental Health (2020-2025). Our approach focuses on enhancing mental health promotion, increasing access to mental health through digitalization of mental health, stepping up collaborations in between agencies and non-governmental organizations, addressing suicide prevention in youth through gatekeepers' training, strengthening mental health disaster preparedness through supported community-based. The National Centre of Excellence for Mental Health was established to serve as a focal point for the coordination of mental health initiatives and programmes in Malaysia through strategic partnerships with governmental and corporate organisations, academic institutions, and non-governmental organisations. Each stakeholder has its strengths and shortcomings and should not work in silo. The Ministry of Health envisioned incorporating mental health into all policies and transforming stigma into solutions.