

## ABSTRACT

A cross sectional descriptive study was carried out between September to December, 2014 to explore the knowledge and practice of betel quid chewing in urban area of Than-Daung Township, Kayin State. Structured questionnaires and in depth interviews were used to obtain necessary responses. Factors related to betel chewing were found to be multi-factorial. The knowledge level on health effects of betel quid chewing and control measures was low. The high level of knowledge was found more in those with high educational level. Regarding the practice of betel quid chewing, the overall prevalence of current betel quid chewing was 71 % ( 95% confidence interval=64.9%-76.2%) with prevalence in men (72.8%) and women (67.7%) and the magnitude of betel quid chewing was high. The reported median age of betel quid chewing was 20 years and the mean value was  $24.3 \pm 7.5$  years and ranging from 12 to 50 years. The highest betel quid chewing practice started at 18-28 age groups. This finding indicated that adolescents and working age group were vulnerable to betel quid chewing. There was a significantly association between an increase in knowledge level and favorable practice. The commonest reason for betel quid chewing was peer pressure (39%) followed by among family members betel quid chewing (23.1%). The influence of peer pressure is vital for the initiation of betel quid chewing pointing out the importance of peer group education. In conclusion, the study pointed out that betel quid chewing was very high and influenced largely by the social factors such as parental betel chewing status and that of friends, easy availability and importantly and misconcepts which were rooted in Myanmar tradition and culture. The other important fact was that promoting the knowledge level was not enough to reduce the magnitude of betel chewing use in the community. Thus, individual counseling program, intensive mass media education program and strict legislation should be done frequently to improve awareness of hazards of betel chewing among community.