Factors associated with tobacco use among adolescents: the role of parents, peers, attitudes and skills

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INTRODUCTION
Tobacco use among adolescents represents a major public health problem. Smoking initiation can be influenced by several factors such as peer smoking, social influences, individual risk conditions, parental tobacco smoking and related behaviors.

METHODS
This is a secondary analysis of the baseline survey of the EU-Dap (European Drug Addiction Prevention) randomized controlled trial. The analytical sample included 12-14 years old students from seven European countries who participated in the baseline survey of the trial and answered the questions investigating lifetime smoking. Socio-demographic characteristics, friends’ substance use, knowledge, attitudes and beliefs toward substances, risk perceptions, refusal and decision making skills, self-esteem, family factors, parental tobacco smoking and permissiveness were studied as risk factors for lifetime tobacco use through a forward multivariate logistic regression model.

RESULTS
Low refusal skills toward tobacco use were the strongest predictor of lifetime smoking, followed by having friends who smoke. One-parent household, parental smoking, parental permissiveness to smoke out of home, bad family relationship and low connectedness with parents proved to be associated with adolescent smoking. Wrong risk perceptions and beliefs, negative self-esteem, positive attitudes toward substances, negative decision making skills and low respect for teachers were also significantly associated with tobacco use. Differences by gender and socio-economic status were observed.

CONCLUSIONS
Forthcoming prevention programs should address the identified factors in order to prevent smoking initiation.