

Did We Finally Slay the Evil Dragon of Cigarette Smoking in the Late 20th Century?

Unfortunately, the Answer Is No—the Dragon Is Still Alive and Well in the 21st Century and Living in the Third World. Shame on Us!

Richard D. Hurt, MD; Joseph G. Murphy, MD, FCCP; and William F. Dunn, MD, FCCP

If cigarettes were introduced as a new consumer product today, it is unlikely they would receive government regulatory approval. Cigarettes have proven biologic toxicities (carcinogenesis, atherogenesis, teratogenesis) and well-established causal links to human disease. Things were very different in 1913 when the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company introduced the first modern cigarette, the iconic Camel. By the early 1950s, definitive scientific reports linked cigarettes and human disease, but it was more than a half century later (2006) that cigarette manufacturers were found guilty by a federal court of deceptive product marketing regarding the health hazards of tobacco use. In the United States, cigarette smoking remains a major but slowly declining problem. But in developing countries, cigarette use is expanding tremendously. In global terms, the epidemic of smoking-caused disease is projected to increase rapidly in coming decades, not decline. Society may have begun to slowly win the smoking battle in the developed world, but we are resoundingly losing the global war on smoking. All is not lost! There is some good news! The 2003 Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, supported strongly by the American College of Chest Physicians, is the first global public health treaty of the new millennium. Many developed societies have begun planning to rid their countries of cigarettes in what is called the Endgame Strategy, and now is the time for the international medical community to help change tobacco policy to a worldwide endgame approach to rid all humanity of smoking-related diseases.

CHEST 2014; 146(6):1438-1443

ABBREVIATIONS: CHEST = American College of Chest Physicians; e-cigarette = electronic cigarette; FCTC = Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

Cigarettes are unique among consumer products in that they universally harm human health and contribute to premature death in > 60% of long-term consumers.¹ The toll of preventable human misery caused by smoking is truly staggering.

Smoking results in the premature death of 450,000 American smokers every year as well as 50,000 nonsmokers through secondhand smoke exposure.² Worldwide, 5.5 million smokers and 600,000 nonsmokers die prematurely each year; the toll

Manuscript received November 27, 2013; revision accepted May 1, 2014.

AFFILIATIONS: From the Nicotine Dependence Center (Dr Hurt), Division of Cardiovascular Diseases (Dr Murphy), and Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine (Dr Dunn), Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN.

CORRESPONDENCE TO: Richard D. Hurt, MD, Nicotine Dependence Center, Mayo Clinic, 200 First St SW, Rochester, MN 55905; e-mail: rhurt@mayo.edu

© 2014 AMERICAN COLLEGE OF CHEST PHYSICIANS. Reproduction of this article is prohibited without written permission from the American College of Chest Physicians. See online for more details.

DOI: 10.1378/chest.13-2804

will rise to 8 million annually by 2030.³ Cigarette smoking caused 100 million deaths in the 20th century, about the same number as all war death; 1 billion premature deaths are projected in the 21st century, mainly in the developing world.³

A Modern Product That Is Legal Only by Historic Accident

There are two popular American myths about the cigarette, namely, that it is an ancient traditional product and a government-approved consumer product in the United States. Both are wrong! Tobacco leaf is indigenous to the Western Hemisphere but was unknown to the rest of the world until the 15th century.⁴ Indigenous Americans historically used tobacco (pipes, cigars, and chewing tobacco), but, importantly, did not smoke cigarettes. Cigar smoke and pipe tobacco smoke are alkaline and deliver a high percentage of “freebase” nicotine, which is too harsh for most people to inhale in substantial quantities. Cigarettes were not a commercial product of note until the late 19th century, when two important industrial developments occurred: first, a new curing process lowered the pH of tobacco, making it more palatable, and, concurrently, the first mechanized cigarette rolling machine was invented.

In 1906, the US Congress passed the Pure Food and Drug Act,⁵ which mandated the Bureau of Chemistry, the predecessor of the US Food and Drug Administration, to regulate food and drug safety but specifically excluded tobacco,⁶ a subterfuge attributed to the lobbying efforts of Buck Duke, the founder of the American Tobacco Company. This aggressive political lobbying strategy continued for > 100 years, during which tobacco companies succeeded in keeping their products legal and minimally regulated in the United States. Thus, a perfect health storm was created, allowing the largely unregulated tobacco industry to massively expand cigarette sales and secondarily ignite the largest noninfectious epidemic of preventable human disease and disability in recorded world history.

Camel: The First Modern Cigarette

In 1913, the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company introduced a new cigarette, Camel, which was promoted with a novel and aggressive mass media advertising campaign, the likes of which had never before been seen; the success of Camel led to competing brands such as Lucky Strike and Chesterfield. In 1905, Americans smoked < 5 billion cigarettes per year, but by 1917 (only 4 years after “the year of the Camel”) consumption in the United States exceeded 16 billion cigarettes per

year and spiraled upward to > 600 billion per year in 1980.^{7,8}

The Companies’ Pledge to the American Public: The Frank Statement

By the early 1950s, definitive scientific reports of cigarettes causing diseases (lung cancer, emphysema) generated great concern in the public health community.⁹⁻¹¹ The cigarette manufacturers responded with a cynical strategy that was widely publicized through the Frank Statement in full-page newspaper advertisements in > 400 leading newspapers across the United States.¹² The Frank Statement represented tobacco companies’ pledge to the American people with pronouncements such as the following¹³:

- “We accept an interest in people’s health as a basic responsibility, paramount to every other consideration in our business.”
- “We believe the products we make are not injurious to health.”
- “We always have and always will cooperate closely with those whose task it is to safeguard the public health.”

Not only did the industry not live up to the pledge as released, but also it had an earlier secret draft of the Frank Statement that contained statements that were more specific but were removed from the final version,¹³⁻¹⁵ as follows¹³:

- “We will never produce and market a product shown to be the cause of any serious human ailment.”
- “We are pledging aid and assistance to the research effort to track down the cause of lung cancer, one of the most baffling problems confronting medical research.”
- “The Committee (newly formed Tobacco Industry Research Committee) will undertake to keep the public informed of such facts as may be developed relating to cigarette smoking and health and other pertinent matters.”

More than 30 million pages of previously secret internal tobacco company documents were made public by the landmark Minnesota Tobacco Trial¹⁶ in 1998, and they revealed an elaborate public relations campaign of obfuscation about the health risks of smoking, highlighted by a disingenuous strategy of creating doubt about the scientific evidence linking smoking and disease. “Doubt is our product since it is the best means of competing with the ‘body of fact’ that exists in the mind of the general public. It is also the means of establishing a controversy.”¹⁷

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5954091>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5954091>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)