

## **The impact of tobacco marketing on tobacco consumption and the effectiveness of comprehensive bans: Findings of the Monograph on *The Role of the Media in Promoting and Reducing Tobacco Use***

In August this year, a major monograph titled *The Role of the Media in Promoting and Reducing Tobacco Use* was released.<sup>1</sup> Developed over five years by a team of five editors, 23 authors and 62 expert reviewers, and peer reviewed through a process akin to that undertaken for US Surgeon-General's reports, the monograph represents the most current and comprehensive summary of the scientific literature on media communications in tobacco promotion and tobacco control. It reviews research from the disciplines of marketing, psychology, communications, statistics, epidemiology and public health, reaching a number of important conclusions, including:

- that the total weight of evidence—from multiple types of studies, conducted by investigators from different disciplines, and using data from a wide range of countries—demonstrates a **causal relationship between tobacco marketing and increased tobacco use**;<sup>2</sup> and
- that the studies of bans on tobacco marketing in different countries show that **comprehensive bans reduce tobacco consumption**, while non-comprehensive restrictions generally induce an increase in expenditures for advertising in “non-banned” media and for other marketing activities, which offset the effect of the partial ban so that any net change in tobacco consumption is minimal or undetectable.<sup>3</sup>

The Monograph reviews a large number of studies to assess the association between tobacco marketing and tobacco use. These include:

- *52 cross-sectional studies*, in which individuals were surveyed at a single point in time to examine the relationships between measures of exposure to tobacco marketing and measures of tobacco-use attitudes and behaviors;<sup>4</sup>
- *16 longitudinal studies*, which involved surveys of a population group, repeated at different points in time, that examined the relationships between measures of exposure to tobacco marketing and measures of tobacco-use attitudes and behaviors;<sup>5</sup>
- *9 experimental (randomized & nonrandomized) studies* that experimentally manipulated exposure to tobacco marketing and then

<sup>1</sup> Tobacco Control Monograph 19, US Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Cancer Institute. Visit <http://cancercontrol.cancer.gov/tcrb/monographs/19/index.html> for copies of the entire report or individual chapters, an Executive Summary containing all the volume and chapter conclusions, the Executive Summary in 6 languages, fact sheets, and further resources including a communication toolkit.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p 281. See generally pp 211-281.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p 280. See generally pp 211-281.

<sup>4</sup> See *ibid*, Table 7.3, pp 242-255.

<sup>5</sup> See *ibid*, Table 7.4, pp 259-263.

assessed the impact of that exposure on measures of tobacco-use attitudes and behaviors;<sup>6</sup> and

- 24 *econometric studies*, reviewed to assess the association over time between the extent of tobacco marketing and the level of tobacco consumption,<sup>7</sup> including:
  - 15 studies that used national time-series data on marketing expenditures;
  - 3 studies that used local-level, cross-sectional data on marketing expenditures; and
  - 6 studies that examined the effect of tobacco advertising restrictions on tobacco consumption.

Other important conclusions of the Monograph include:

- that tobacco marketing has been dominated by three themes:
  - providing satisfaction (taste, freshness, mildness, etc.);
  - assuaging anxieties about the dangers of tobacco use; and
  - creating associations between tobacco use and desirable outcomes (independence, social success, sexual attraction, thinness, etc.);<sup>8</sup>
- that much tobacco marketing targets the psychological needs of adolescents, such as popularity, peer acceptance and positive self-image, and that adolescents who believe that tobacco use can satisfy their psychological needs or whose desired image of themselves is similar to their image of tobacco users are more likely to use tobacco products;<sup>9</sup>
- that even brief exposure to tobacco marketing influences adolescents' attitudes and perceptions about tobacco use and tobacco users, and adolescents' intention to use tobacco products;<sup>10</sup>
- that the targeting of various population groups—including men, women, youth and young adults, specific racial and ethnic populations, religious groups, the working class, and gay and lesbian populations—has been strategically important to the tobacco industry.<sup>11</sup>

The findings of this major report reaffirm the recognition of all Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in Article 13 (Tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship) 'that a comprehensive ban on advertising, promotion and sponsorship would reduce the consumption of tobacco products', and underline the need for the Conference of the Parties to the Convention to adopt guidelines for implementation of Article 13 that are truly comprehensive to assist Parties in effectively implementing this critical provision.

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<sup>6</sup> See *ibid*, Table 7.2, pp 235-6.

<sup>7</sup> See *ibid*, Table 7.5, pp 273.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p 170. See generally pp 141-171.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p 280. See generally pp 211-281.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p 280. See generally pp 211-281.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p 170. See generally pp 141-171.