

NCI TOBACCO CONTROL MONOGRAPH SERIES

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THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN PROMOTING AND REDUCING TOBACCO USE MONOGRAPH NINETEEN

19

Information for Researchers

In the twentieth century, mass media helped create new generations of tobacco users, even as evidence mounted about tobacco's terrible toll on health. This monograph, *The Role of the Media in Promoting and Reducing Tobacco Use*, presented by the National Cancer Institute, comes at a critical time. Both the tobacco industry and public health advocates seek to use more diverse forms of media to influence tobacco use. Despite a decline of roughly 50% in smoking prevalence over the past 40 years, about one in five Americans continues to smoke, and more than 4,000 young people smoke their first cigarette each day.

This monograph provides a comprehensive review and assessment of current evidence regarding the power of the media both to promote and reduce tobacco use. The monograph is the most current and comprehensive summary of the scientific literature on media communications in tobacco promotion and tobacco control. Research included in the review comes from the disciplines of marketing, psychology, communications, statistics, epidemiology, and public health. A vast range of research—from experimental forced-exposure studies in the lab to survey and cohort studies of populations—is reviewed. All of this research is viewed from multiple perspectives—from individuals to broad population studies—to develop a comprehensive understanding of how exposure to the media influences tobacco use. Armed with this understanding, it is possible to explore effective ways to leverage the media to improve public health.

The volume's contributors recognize the complexity of assessing the media's influence on tobacco-related attitudes and behavior. The ubiquity of the media often prevents subjecting communications to the global standard of the randomized controlled trial, so other study designs and methods are described that—when analyzed together—can help assess causality and guide further research. Finally, a call is made for monitoring tobacco industry activities in a changing media environment and using research to inform tobacco control policy and program decisions.

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The monograph outlines directions for future research including:

- Understanding how price discounts interact with other promotional strategies to encourage tobacco use.
- Looking at the point-of-purchase environment and how it affects tobacco use.
- Understanding perceptions about cigarette packaging and branding, including how clever packaging seeks to reassure the public about health concerns.
- Tracking the tobacco industry's activities and expenditures, including those for corporate sponsorship and corporate advertising.
- Monitoring the tobacco industry's increasing shift from traditional, restricted forms of advertising to new or nontraditional media, such as the Internet, videogames, Podcasts, and cigarette packages.
- Further investigating the effectiveness of paid mass media campaigns in preventing youth smoking and prompting smoking cessation in adults for all population subgroups, including the amount of media needed, and the types of messages that are most effective.
- Paying more attention to the news media coverage of tobacco issues and how the volume and content affect attitudes and behavior.

The evidence presented in this volume underscores the need to continue to study and understand tobacco industry advertising and promotional activities. Despite considerable success in tobacco control since the release of the 1964 Surgeon General's report on smoking and health, tobacco use still accounts for nearly one-third of cancer deaths worldwide, and tobacco-attributable mortality is predicted to increase in the coming decades if current smoking patterns continue. If this trend is to be stopped, an in-depth understanding of the media's power for both tobacco promotion and tobacco control must guide the way.

About the NCI Tobacco Control Monograph Series

The National Cancer Institute established the Tobacco Control Monograph series in 1991 to provide ongoing and timely information about emerging issues in smoking and tobacco prevention and control. Monographs are available at no cost in print and online.

For More Information

For more information or to order this monograph, go to <http://www.cancercontrol.cancer.gov/tcrb/monographs/19/index.html>. To order a free copy, call the NCI Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237) and ask for NIH Publication No. 07-6242.