

New Challenges for 2009

By Cheryl Dudley

Tobacco Companies Targeting Teens, Study Says

By Steven Reinberg - HealthDay Reporter

Tobacco company ads are reaching teenagers and influencing their desire to smoke and what brands they choose, U.S. health officials report.

"The industry will deny that they are marketing to underage youth, but our data are showing that the advertising is still reaching the kids," said Dr. Terry Pechacek, associate director, science, Office on Smoking and Health, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

A spokesman for one of the tobacco companies defended its marketing program. "Kids should not use tobacco products of any kind," said Philip Morris USA spokesman David Sutton. "We take youth access to tobacco products seriously. We have made a significant effort, both at retail and marketing, to connect only to adult smokers," he added.

The brand preferences in the report mirrors what is seen in the marketplace among adult smokers, Sutton said. "If you look at those preferences, they line up with market share among adult tobacco consumers," he said.

Each of the major cigarette companies in the United States has a leading youth brand, Pechacek said. "Industry documents show that all the tobacco companies are continuing to note that if they don't have a leading youth brand, they are in corporate trouble."

In a recent report, the U.S. National Cancer Institute said there is sufficient evidence to conclude that tobacco advertising is directly related to getting people to smoke, Pechacek said.

"Our data in this study, without implying intention, [shows] we are finding that adolescents are being heavily exposed to advertising," Pechacek said.

In an editorial note accompanying the CDC report, researchers noted that, in 2004, 85 percent of teens saw tobacco ads in stores, 50 percent saw them in newspapers or magazines, and 33 percent saw them on the Internet. A whopping 81 percent of teens saw smoking on television or in the movies.

Pechacek noted that the U.S. National Cancer Institute report found that partial bans on tobacco advertising are ineffective, and a 2007 report by the Institute of Medicine called for stronger measures to control tobacco advertising.

The World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control has called for a complete ban on tobacco advertising as far as possible within constitutional restraints, Pechacek said.

Tobacco cessation programs are underfunded when compared with CDC recommendations. "Are we reaching a majority of vulnerable kids? The evidence is clearly no," Pechacek said. "We are reaching some of the vulnerable kids, probably in the range of 20 to 30 percent."

There was a dramatic drop in teen smoking since 1997, Pechacek said. "But that drop stalled in 2003. For 2007, the data are indicating that the sharp decline has stopped. We are still seeing a slow pattern of possible decline. But we are stalled at probably one in five high-school students smoking," he said. "That's pretty much a replacement number for adults that quit."

MCHUMOR.COM by T. McCracken



"I just couldn't resist the targeted ads."

Largest Tobacco Tax Increase in History

The United States Congress and President Obama have enacted a new law that increases the federal cigarette tax in the United States by 62 cents per pack and also increases federal excise taxes on other tobacco products.

This is by far the largest increase ever in the federal tobacco tax in the U.S., a step that health advocates say will significantly reduce cigarette smoking and other forms of tobacco use and the deaths, disease and health care costs that result from it.

The revenue from the tobacco tax will be used to expand the Children's Health Insurance Program, which provides health insurance to low-income children.

Health advocates are calling on other nations to also protect the health of their citizens by increasing tobacco taxes, as called for by the international tobacco control treaty, the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

Scientific studies from around the world show that increasing the price of tobacco products through excise tax increases is one of the most effective ways to reduce tobacco use. A 10 percent increase in price reduces overall cigarette consumption by about 4 percent in high-income countries and by up to an 8 percent in developing countries.

Price increases are proven effective at preventing children from starting to use tobacco products and encouraging tobacco users to quit. According to health advocates, the new cigarette tax increase in the United States will lead to nearly two million fewer kids starting to smoke, help more than one million adult smokers quit, prevent nearly 900,000 smoking-caused deaths and produce \$44.5 billion in long-term health care savings by reducing tobacco-caused health care costs.

Refusing the Sale

As you look down the road towards the future, keep in mind that your greatest challenge may be refusing the sale of tobacco to minors. Increases in tobacco taxes may be offset by increased efforts to lure kids to try tobacco products. Since the majority of smokers begin smoking before the age of 19, the importance of your job cannot be stressed enough.

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