

# **POLICIES TO ACHIEVE A SMOKE-FREE SOCIETY: A RESEARCH AGENDA FOR 2010-2015 (HIGHLIGHTS)**

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**SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICY RESEARCH PROGRAM (SAPRP) IS A  
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# Contents

## Policies to Achieve a Smoke-Free Society

1	Advisory Board
4	Introduction
5	<b>I. Tax and Price Policies</b>
6	Priority Research Questions 2010-2015
7	<b>II. Product Regulation Policies</b>
8	Priority Research Questions 2010-2015
9	<b>III. Policies to Limit Product Marketing</b>
10	Priority Research Questions 2010-2015
11	<b>IV. Policies to Assure Effective Counter-Marketing and Public Education Campaigns</b>
12	Priority Research Questions 2010-2015
13	<b>V. Policies to Expand Clean Indoor Air Laws and Restrictions</b>
14	Priority Research Questions 2010-2015
15	<b>VI. Policies to Increase Demand for, Access to, and Use of Proven Cessation Treatments</b>
16	Priority Research Questions 2010-2015
17	<b>VII. Policies to Increase Accountability and Performance</b>
18	Priority Research Questions 2010-2015
19	Conclusion

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“...the United States  
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# Introduction

Significant progress has been made toward achieving the goal of a smoke-free society over the past quarter century. Cigarette smoking prevalence has dropped markedly since 1984, and over half of the U.S. population now lives in communities covered by a comprehensive smoke-free law. Despite this success, the United States and the rest of the world still have a long way to go to realize the goal of a smoke-free society. Cigarette smoking remains the number one preventable cause of premature death in the U.S., and disparities are widening with the highest prevalence of tobacco use and tobacco-caused death and disease in populations with the least income and education.

This paper briefly examines seven policy domains critical to national and global progress toward a smoke-free society over the next five years: (I) tax and price policies; (II) product regulation; (III) policies to limit product marketing; (IV) policies to assure effective public education campaigns; (V) policies to expand clean indoor air laws and restrictions; (VI) policies to increase demand for, access to, and use of proven cessation treatments; and (VII) overarching accountability and performance policies. A more detailed discussion of the subject, including all scientific references, is available at [http://www.saprp.org/research\\_agenda.cfm](http://www.saprp.org/research_agenda.cfm).

## I. Tax and Price Policies

The U.S. has one of the lowest tax rates on cigarettes in the world. Taxes represent approximately 35% of the price of a pack of cigarettes in the U.S. compared to 60% or more in many other countries. Moreover, U.S. survey data show broad and consistent public support for tobacco tax increases.

## Priority Research Questions 2010-2015

- 1 | What is the potential for different levels of tax/price increases to have differing impacts on tobacco use?
- 2 | How will the tobacco industry respond (through discounts and coupons) to future federal and state tobacco tax increases? How will price increases in cigarettes affect the purchase of other tobacco products, such as smokeless tobacco?
- 3 | How will the economic crisis (that began in 2008) in the U.S. impact decisions about tobacco taxes?
- 4 | How will raising taxes affect quitting efforts by young and adult smokers, smokers from low-income and minority groups, and women?

## II. Product Regulation Policies

Scientists, policy makers, and international public health organizations have been calling for regulation of tobacco products for decades. Since June 2009, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has been charged with the responsibility of regulating tobacco products sold in the U.S.



## Priority Research Questions 2010-2015

- 1 | What effects will a proposed strategy for regulation based on product performance measures (e.g., levels of carcinogens and other toxicants of combustion products) have on consumer exposures to toxicants and ultimately health risks?
- 2 | What is the best evidence on the role of packages as marketing tools and what is the best evidence on the role of pack warnings?
- 3 | What is the likely impact of “plain” packaging on consumer perceptions about product risk and product attractiveness?
- 4 | What are the policy and legal research needs to refocus tobacco control with the objective of eliminating the tobacco industry or at least eliminating the sale of combustible tobacco products?
- 5 | Is a buyout of the tobacco industry by state and/or federal governments a feasible alternative?

### III. Policies to Limit Product Marketing

The tobacco industry spends billions annually on tobacco marketing in the U.S. and regularly modifies and introduces new products and brand line extensions with no oversight. Increased U.S. expenditures on point-of-sale discounts and promotions are undermining the beneficial public health effects of tobacco tax increases. Current federal law bans broadcast advertising of cigarettes, although it also preempts localities from regulating tobacco marketing for health reasons. The U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has the authority under the Federal Trade Commission Act to regulate the advertising of consumer products to prevent “unfair or deceptive acts or practices in commerce” but has done little to stem the marketing of tobacco products.

## Priority Research Questions 2010-2015

- 1 | What are the effects of current marketing practices, especially ads for smokeless tobacco products and point-of-sale cigarette promotions and discounts, on the public health benefits of tobacco tax increases and smoke-free air laws?
- 2 | What are the policy precedents and prospects for taxing tobacco marketing costs?
- 3 | What would happen if the federal preemption on local regulation of tobacco products were rescinded?
- 4 | How is the tobacco industry likely to respond to undermine efforts that further regulate their marketing?

## IV. Policies to Assure Effective Counter-Marketing and Public Education Campaigns

Tobacco counter-marketing and mass media anti-smoking and cessation campaigns are recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as integral to comprehensive state and local tobacco control initiatives. They serve to amplify the effects of other components of effective comprehensive tobacco control initiatives. They also have an important role to play in de-normalizing tobacco use and in building public demand and policymakers' support for the implementation of effective tobacco control policies and programs.

## Priority Research Questions 2010-2015

- 1 How can mass media counter-marketing campaigns be more cost-effective? How can the Internet and social networking technologies help reach new audiences?
- 2 In what ways can mass media campaigns improve other components of effective comprehensive tobacco control programs, such as taxes or clean indoor air regulations?
- 3 What is the impact of corporate-image campaigns and tobacco company-sponsored smoking prevention campaigns on smoking-related attitudes and behaviors among adults in different socio-economic subgroups?
- 4 Do industry marketing efforts of purportedly reduced harm tobacco products undermine progress in tobacco control?

## V. Policies to Expand Clean Indoor Air Laws and Restrictions

Since the 1970s the number and restrictiveness of laws and policies regulating smoking in worksite and public places in the U.S. have increased. As of January 2009, 23 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and hundreds of municipalities had implemented 100% smoke-free provisions (in workplaces and/or restaurants and/or bars) representing 70.3% of the population.

## Priority Research Questions 2010-2015

- 1 | What impact do smoking restrictions have on people's attitudes about tobacco, smoking, and the behavior of smokers? How do these impacts vary across socio-demographic groups?
- 2 | How could the public health benefits of smoke-free air laws be maximized, for instance, by pairing their introduction with promotions of free cessation counseling and medication?
- 3 | What is the effect of and public support for expanding the restrictions on where smoking is and is not allowed, including restrictions on smoking in cars, multi-family dwellings, at parks and other outdoor other venues?
- 4 | Does access to new nicotine products or nicotine replacement therapies (NRT), such as patches and gums, undermine efforts to reduce cigarette consumption by promoting dual use of both oral nicotine and combustible tobacco products?

## VI. Policies to Increase Demand for, Access to, and Use of Proven Cessation Treatments

For all the money invested in biomedical research to find cures for cancer in past decades, most of the progress achieved in reducing cancer mortality has been the result of deaths avoided through successful tobacco control, especially efforts to motivate and assist smokers to quit. Four decades of research has helped to discover, evaluate, and apply a range of evidence-based and cost-effective behavioral and pharmacologic treatments to help smokers quit and achieve long-term abstinence.

## Priority Research Questions 2010-2015

- 1 | Are there ways that health care providers could be better supported and incentivized to consistently screen, advise, and assist their patients to quit in both inpatient and outpatient settings?
- 2 | What would be the effect of making over-the-counter (OTC) NRT products available in daily doses rather than more expensive monthly and weekly package sizes?
- 3 | How can consumer product design and marketing principles be used to induce more smokers to make a quit attempt using an evidenced-based treatment method?
- 4 | What are the benefits and political drawbacks of earmarking tobacco tax increases to fund tobacco cessation and control programs? What are the barriers to, and drivers and feasibility of, various quit line financing models?

## VII. Policies to Increase Accountability and Performance

Cost-effective treatments and policies are available to reduce smoking rates, yet no state in the nation will meet the national Healthy People objective of reducing cigarette smoking prevalence to less than 12% by 2010. Why is this? One answer appears to be that there is too little accountability or incentive for reducing tobacco use. This section explores policies to hold groups accountable for the tobacco problem and efforts to achieve a smoke-free society.

## Priority Research Questions 2010-2015

- 1 | How can federal health care quality and other standards be structured to motivate health providers and health care plans to do a better job addressing tobacco use by patients?
- 2 | What kinds of incentives can be used by the federal government to motivate states to devote resources to tobacco control and prevention?
- 3 | Can the tobacco industry be held accountable for reducing smoking rates to meet national objectives? How would a “cap and trade” system work whereby manufacturers are penalized for failure to meet national public health objectives for tobacco use prevalence?
- 4 | Is a ban on combustion tobacco products feasible? What might be the unintended consequences of such a policy?

## Conclusion

This research agenda is designed to raise numerous critical research questions that will need to be answered in moving toward a smoke-free society. New and innovative approaches to reduce the burden of tobacco need to be generated, and they need to be debated with the support of an evidence base. The authors hope that this research agenda will advance that process. A more detailed discussion of the subject, including all scientific references, is available at [http://www.saprp.org/research\\_agenda.cfm](http://www.saprp.org/research_agenda.cfm). Three other research agendas (on alcohol prevention, drug prevention, and alcohol and drug treatment) developed by the Substance Abuse Policy Research Program (SAPRP) are also available at the same URL.



