SCIENTIFIC CONCLUSIONS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGNS

Fifty years after the first Surgeon General's report on smoking and health, the 2014 Surgeon General's Report, *The Health Consequences of Smoking—50 Years of Progress*[1], shows that cigarette smoking is even more hazardous than previously thought. The report warns that, "The burden of smoking-attributable disease and pre-mature death and its high costs to the nation will continue for decades unless smoking prevalence is reduced more rapidly than the current trajectory." The report also notes that millions of deaths could be averted, "making tobacco control a highest priority in our overall public health commitment and strategy." (p. 870-871)

Noting that the "current rate of progress in tobacco control is not fast enough. More needs to be done," the Surgeon General's report calls for a number of specific actions, including:

> **"Counteracting industry marketing by sustaining high impact national media campaigns like the CDC's Tips from Former Smokers campaign and FDA's youth prevention campaigns at a high frequency level and exposure for 12 months a year for a decade or more."** (p. 875)

The evidence that public education campaigns are effective at reducing tobacco use is solid and extensive. Scientific experts say the data clearly show that one of the best ways to reduce tobacco use is an aggressive public education campaign.

From the 2014 Surgeon General's report, *The Health Consequences of Smoking – 50 Years of Progress*

> *"The evidence is sufficient to conclude that mass media campaigns, comprehensive community programs, and comprehensive statewide tobacco control programs prevent initiation of tobacco use and reduce the prevalence of tobacco use among youth and adults."*

> *"Mass-reach health communication interventions can be powerful tools for preventing the initiation of tobacco use, promoting and facilitating cessation, and shaping social norms related to tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke."*

> *"Mass media campaigns can be very effective; however, to produce large declines in the prevalence of adult smoking at the national level, these campaigns need to be implemented on a sustained basis with updated content."*

> *"Research shows that countermarketing and other media approaches must have sufficient reach, frequency, and duration to be successful. Mass media campaigns have been a particularly successful component of prevention efforts in tobacco control for decades; able to reach large proportions of the population, mass media messages have the potential to influence not only individual behaviors but also social norms and institutional policies, which in turn can shape patterns of population-wide tobacco use."*

Task Force on Community Preventive Services Community Preventive Services – "The Community Guide" 2013 Update http://www.thecommunityguide.org/tobacco/massreach.html

> *"The Community Preventive Services Task Force recommends mass-reach health communication interventions based on strong evidence of effectiveness in: (1) decreasing the prevalence of tobacco use; (2) increasing cessation and use of available services such as quitlines; and 3) decreasing initiation of tobacco use among young people."*

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[1] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The Health Consequences of Smoking: 50 Years of Progress. A Report of the Surgeon General.* Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2014. http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/50-years-of-progress/index.html

"Economic evidence shows mass-reach health communication interventions are cost-effective, and savings from averted healthcare costs exceed intervention costs."

From the 2012 Surgeon General's report, *Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults*
http://www.thecommunityguide.org/tobacco/initiation/massmediaeducation.html

"Evidence indicates that mass media campaigns can be one of the most effective strategies in changing social norms and preventing youth smoking."

"Evidence also suggests a dose-response relationship between exposure to antismoking media messages and reduced smoking behavior among youth, which is further evidence of the effectiveness of these messages."

"Influential and successful campaigns contain a number of essential elements including optimized themes, appropriate emotional tone, appealing format, clear messages, intensity, and adequate repetition."

"There also is strong evidence that media ads designed for adults also decrease the prevalence of smoking among youth."

"The research provides consistent evidence from controlled-exposure studies that ads evoking strong negative emotions (including those about the health effects of smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke as well as those about the deceptiveness of the tobacco industry) show greater recall and are rated higher on measures of appeal and smoking-related beliefs and intentions not to smoke than are ads that do not evoke these kinds of emotions."

From the 2008 National Cancer Institute (NCI) Monograph, *The Role of the Media in Promoting and Reducing Tobacco Use* http://cancercontrol.cancer.gov/tcrb/monographs/19/index.html

"Evidence from controlled field experiments and population studies conducted by many investigators in many countries shows that anti-tobacco mass media campaigns can reduce tobacco use."

"A strong evidence base is emerging for anti-tobacco advertising, with a consensus that advertisements that arouse strong negative emotions perform better than those that do not. These advertisements tend to depict serious harm done by smoking or secondhand smoke in an authentic way…"

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention's *Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control Programs* http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/stateandcommunity/best_practices/index.htm

"Health communication interventions can be powerful tools for preventing smoking initiation, promoting and facilitating cessation, and shaping social norms related to tobacco use."

"Messages that elicit strong emotional response, such as personal testimonials and viscerally negative content, produce stronger and more consistent effect on audience recall."