



## The facts – what every nurse should know

### **The epidemic of tobacco-caused disease is a product of the rise of Big Tobacco.**

Prior to the industrialization of cigarette production and marketing, rates of tobacco use were lower, most tobacco use involved cigars, or spit tobacco, and lung cancer was such a rare disease that most clinicians never saw a case of it in their lifetimes. In 1914, per capita tobacco consumption was less than one pound per year and the death rate from lung cancer was 0.6 per 100,000 persons. In 1986, death rates from lung cancer ranged from 24.3 to more than 70 per 100,000 persons—as high as 116 times the rate in 1914. Today, tobacco consumption is approximately four times higher than it was in 1914 and lung cancer is the number one cause of cancer deaths, killing more women than breast cancer, virtually all of it linked to cigarette smoking. This is an industrially produced epidemic.

### **The tobacco industry has known for decades that its products are addictive and deadly.**

The tobacco companies' own internal documents show that they have been well aware of the effects of their products. Addison Yeaman, general counsel for the Brown and Williamson tobacco company, wrote in 1963: "...Nicotine is addictive. We are, then, in the business of selling nicotine, an addictive drug..." The tobacco industry has also manipulated the chemical composition of cigarettes to enhance the uptake of free-base nicotine. See UCSF's Center for Tobacco Control

### **Tobacco companies engaged in massive, coordinated efforts to obscure the truth about their products.**

The so-called "Frank Statement" of 1954 announced the creation of a multi-company funded Tobacco Industry Research Committee "to meet the public's concern" about recently reported research that linked cigarette smoking to lung cancer. This was just the beginning of a long-term plan to obscure the truth about the disease effects of their products, both from smoking and secondhand smoke. Their objective, as the documents reveal, was to "maintain doubt on the scientific front." See <http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/>

"Emphasize controversy," was the approach they determined to take, rather than pulling these deadly products from the market. "If we can reach the stage where the general public recognizes that there is a genuine controversy over smoking and health, we shall have achieved our target. Our job is...to sow seeds of doubt"

Repeatedly, they tried to reassure the public that the science was still in question. See <http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu>, in which plans for a tobacco industry publication are discussed: "The most important type of story is that which casts doubt on the cause and effect theory of disease and smoking," they wrote.



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### **The tobacco industry has engaged in manipulation of science for public relations purposes.**

The industry-funded research organizations established by tobacco companies funded “special projects” reviewed by lawyers to ensure they would provide research results favorable to industry. The tobacco industry also has paid for and arranged “ghost” authors of scientific papers, distorted the evidence, and tried to discredit scientists. A recent study showed that—after controlling for study quality and other factors—the primary determinant of whether a review article concluded that secondhand smoke was not harmful was tobacco industry funding of the work.

### **The tobacco industry has targeted children, youth and young adults.**

Because an estimated 80% of smokers take up the habit before they are 18 years old, the industry focuses heavily on identifying and recruiting these “replacement smokers.” Studies have shown that Joe Camel was a more recognized figure among children than Mickey Mouse. See <http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu/tid/eyn18c00> for a document that discusses “replacement smokers.” The tobacco industry now claims it does not want children to smoke and has developed aggressive “youth non-smoking campaigns.” However, their messages have repeatedly been shown to be ineffective, as they focus on smoking as an “adult choice” –tapping effectively into adolescent desires to rebel and be adult.

### **The tobacco industry targets vulnerable/marginalized groups.**

The tobacco industry has over the years made special efforts to target groups including racial/ethnic minorities, lower income people, gay people, and others who are already at increased health risk due to poverty, prejudice, and lack of access to health services and resources.

The tobacco industry regards health authorities—the Surgeon General, the World Health Organization, and major organizations like the American Lung Association—as their “opponents” and has engaged in spying and attempts to discredit, disrupt their work and obscure their messages.

See the WHO report about these efforts at [www.who.int/genevahearings/inquiry.html](http://www.who.int/genevahearings/inquiry.html) The tobacco industry also regards nurses as “formidable opponents.” See “An overview of anti-smoking organizations” at <http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu>

### **The tobacco industry knows firsthand that its products cause suffering and death: its customers and their families have been telling them so for years.**

The tobacco companies’ previously-secret files contain hundreds, possibly thousands of letters written by dying customers and their grieving families, sharing their anguish and asking to be removed from the mailing lists companies use to send customers birthday cards with coupons for free or discounted cigarettes: “discount coupons to death.” See letters In some cases, their response



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was to deny that cigarettes were in any way responsible and send misinformation to consumers.  
Just one example found in the secret documents.

**The tobacco industry is now targeting developing countries where smoking rates have been historically low, especially among women.**

China is regarded as a “prize” for tobacco companies, with its huge population. The industry is also making efforts to increase cigarette smoking in developing countries in Africa, Latin America, and elsewhere. The poverty of these countries makes offers from the tobacco industry difficult to refuse. As tobacco companies establish a presence, the use of tobacco becomes normalized. The World Health Organization estimates that if present trends continue, tobacco will kill 10 million people a year by 2025, and seven million deaths will occur in developing countries.

**Tobacco is an environmentally destructive industry.**

In addition to the problems of cigarette butt litter, tobacco is a very pesticide-intensive crop. Also, the deforestation of developing countries for wood used in tobacco curing is becoming a significant concern.