REPRESENTING RESEARCHERS ON 50 YEARS AS AN ANTI-SMOKING ACTIVIST
The Danger of the Single Narrative

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Since writing his first article on the landmark Surgeon General's Report on Smoking and Health in 1964 as a high school newspaper editor, Dr. Alan Blum has presented over 2,000 invited lectures on tobacco at all 50 U.S. states and 18 other countries, including 45 presentations at 11 world conferences. In 1977, he founded the first physicians' and smoking activism organization, DOC (Doctors Against Cigarettes), which was purchased in 1992 by Community to Prevent Tobacco companies and cigarette brands. In the 1980s, as editor of the New York State Journal of Medicine and the Medical Journal of Australia, he produced the first three theme issues on the world tobacco epidemic of any journal.

CHALLENGES

SHAMING MEDICAL ASSOCIATIONS INTO FIGHTING SMOKING

In the 1960s and 1970s, as epidiologic studies linked smoking as a leading cause of lung cancer, cigarette companies began to promote their brands at the annual American Medical Association (AMA) convention and other physician's meetings. Until 1975 the AMA would rely on tobacco companies for its weekely journal, JAMA. Between 1964 and 1978, the AMA received $11.8 million from six tobacco companies to collaborate on articles written by industry-sponsored employees on the dangers of smoking and harmful components of tobacco smoke. Even after ending its agreement to tobacco companies, the AMA did not attack smoking. In 1981 the author and DOC led a successful campaign to have the AMA remove more than $1.4 million in shares of Philip Morris and RJ Reynolds tobacco companies in its members' retirement fund. The AMA is now back to its old ways.

Helping to End Tobacco Sponsorship of Sports

Despite legislative and regulatory efforts in Europe and the U.S. to ban tobacco companies from using sponsorship to endorse tobacco companies sponsorship of sports is in the spirit. The new tobacco industry strategy now involves billions of dollars in visual and verbal mentions of tobacco. Even in countries with restrictive policies on tobacco sponsorship, such as Australia, smokeless tobacco companies have been given special promotional rights to take advantage of the low level of awareness, especially among young women. They are inspired by the 1950s. In 1980, the tobacco industry specifically created the $15 million campaign of more than 50 tobacco-sponsored sports events on TV. In 1980, the tobacco industry specifically created the “Global TV Guide to Tobacco-Sponsored Sports” to inform the tobacco world about tobacco sponsorship.

More Symbol than Substance

While cigarette smoking in the U.S. has been cut by more than half over the last 50 years to under 20%, the unfortunate reality is that 55 million Americans, most in the 18–44-year-old group, all created as a result of the rapid decline in smoking. In the crucial years following the Surgeon General's Report on Smoking and Health in 1964, tobacco companies were inveigled because of the tobacco industry's political power. In a document leaked recently, it can be seen that tobacco companies lobbied the federal government for the FDA's Tobacco Control and Prevention Act to ensure that tobacco companies would not be regulated by the FDA. Furthermore, tobacco companies also lobbied the FDA to create the “centers of excellence” in tobacco regulatory science; the government body that the tobacco industry strongly disbursed to do research instead of mass media campaigns. By virtue of the recent $20 trillion settlement, one of the 14 centers has been designated by the FDA to create a “center of excellence” in tobacco regulatory science. The tobacco industry strongly disbursed to do research instead of mass media campaigns.

Public health researchers are finding more and more tobacco and less that it causes smoking because lung cancer, heart disease, and emphysema has existed for over 50 years. Yet the tobacco industry continues to spend billions of dollars to research instead of mass media campaigns. By virtue of the recent $20 trillion settlement, one of the 14 centers has been designated by the FDA to create a “center of excellence” in tobacco regulatory science.

Ridding the Arts of Ill-Gotten Gains

Corporate sponsorship of ballet and opera companies, museums and art festivals, and art exhibitions was pioneered in the 1960s by Philip Morris. Maker of the top-selling cigarette for 20 years, Philip Morris. As the tobacco industry's negative health image continued to be perceived as a threat by the industry, Philip Morris, among opinion leader in the arts, business, and politics, the tobacco industry adopted the slogan, “It takes art to make companies great.” As a result, Philip Morris forged close ties with top institutions as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, among other cultural institutions. The influence of artists and performers refused to participate in tobacco-sponsored exhibits and events. Attending and documenting more than 100 tobacco-sponsored events, Dr. Blum compiled a comprehensive database detailing the relationship between cigarette makers and arts organizations. He organized “house parties” by DOC at Philip Morris-sponsored performances of the Houston Grand Opera and at art exhibits at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the New York Historical Society. In 1987, he was invited to the Metropolitan Museum of Art's annual cultural event, “Artists as Artists,” aimed at cultural groups and right-thinking designers. He saw the slogan, “It takes art to make companies great.” As a result, Philip Morris forged close ties with top institutions as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, among other cultural institutions. The influence of artists and performers refused to participate in tobacco-sponsored exhibits and events. Attending and documenting more than 100 tobacco-sponsored events, Dr. Blum compiled a comprehensive database detailing the relationship between cigarette makers and arts organizations.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

The single narrative of tobacco control, wherein researcher-defined policies tends to legislation and regulation, conflicts with the industry's effort to manipulate and undermine. tobacco control initiatives. Such activism needs to be studied and reviewed.

CAUTIONING ON THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY AGENDA

In 1983, Dr. Blum and DOC executive director Eric Sobell released a report highlighting the hypocrisy of pharmaceutical and other health-related companies that were allies of the tobacco industry.

• CIBA-Geigy manufactured a nicotine patch (Habitrol) for smoking cessation and was a major supplier of pesticides used in growing tobacco. The patent holder for the nicotine patch, the Swiss group, was also the parent company of Philip Brision Tobacco, maker of Red Man, the tobacco chewing tobacco.

• 3M manufactures stethoscopes, pulmonary medications, and surgical supplies. 3M also helped promote cigarettes through the manufacturing of its products. 3M is cororessed by DOC and the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility (ICOR) to cease cigarette advertising.

• Kodak manufactured diagnostic medical equipment, such as mammography, and also marketed cigarette filters and machines to check the uniformity of cigarette packaging.

• Pfizer produces the smoking cessation drug Chantix. But was a keen supporter of the tobacco industry, including the American Lung Association. Pfizer produces state-of-the-art cigarette-making machinery.

BOYCOTTING DRUGSTORES THAT SELL CIGARETTES

Pharmacies are the last place in which cigarettes should be sold. Yet, in a recent visit, I could see that many pharmacies that sell cigarettes in the United States and Canada supported by DOC and DOC chairman Dr. Blum, and the collaboration between cigarette-manufacturing and drug store chains, it is not surprising. As of today, the 13,500 US pharmacies still sell cigarettes, a number that has actually risen in the last 20 years as tobacco flow independent. These include all the major drug store chains such as Walgreens, Rite-Aid, and Walmart. These drug store chains employ the same types of tobacco marketing strategies as tobacco companies. They produce state-of-the-art cigarette-making machinery.

RIDDING THE ARTS OF ILL-GOTTEN GAINS

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