PROGRESS ON SMOKE-FREE POLICIES, BUT SMOKING PREVALENCE STILL A PROBLEM

Although more than 1,750 colleges and universities in the United States alone have become smoke-free campuses over the past 20 years (including nearly 5,000 that have adopted entirely tobacco-free policies), progress in reducing cigarette-smoking, hookah use among U.S. university students has slowed. Prevalence may be as high as 25%. Globally, reported smoking prevalence among university students ranges from 14% in Iran to 60% in Bangladesh. A little-studied conduit to reducing tobacco use among university students is the tobacco-free policies between the tobacco industry and academia. Coordinated efforts to placate the influence of the tobacco industry in academia are lagging and require greater attention by tobacco control proponents.

RESEARCH GRANTS

INVESTMENT IN TOBACCO STOCKS

NAMING OPPORTUNITIES

Several universities in the US have scholarships, professorships, hospitals, and even medical schools that have been endowed or given to tobacco companies. For example, Philip Morris U.S.A., a division of Philip Morris International, sponsor of the Philip Morris Chair in Neurotoxicology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

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THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY AND UNIVERSITIES

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IN 1982, the University of Virginia became the first university to reject tobacco industry funding. Fewer universities have followed the leader. Indeed, the University of California, Los Angeles, and other major universities recently invested millions of dollars in tobacco companies.

IN 1984, the U.S. preeminent activist group Doctors Ought to Care (DOC) created Project S.N.U.F.F. (Stop Noxious University Funding). The group drafted a resolution in 1990, DOC member Phil Huang, MD, MPH, led a successful effort to convince Harvard University to eliminate $40 million in tobacco stocks from its endowment fund. In 1994, the Public Health Committee of a school in Boston, Harvard Medical School, led by Project S.N.U.F.F., created a campus radio advertisement that pointed out the conflict of interest that the president of Rice University, holder of the recent tobacco industry stock by any university in the 1990s, decided to invest by claiming that the lucrative dividends helped keep tuition costs.

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