

College of Community
Health Sciences

Center for the Study of
Tobacco and Society

THE UNIVERSITY OF
ALABAMA
HEALTH SCIENCES

October 29, 2008

David K. Stevenson, MD
Vice Dean and Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs
Medical School Office Building
251 Campus Drive, Room X131
Stanford, California 94305-5460

Dear Dr. Stevenson:

Thank you for taking time to discuss my concerns about the failure of Robert Jackler and Robert Proctor to accord proper attribution in their widely publicized exhibit of old cigarette ads purchased on ebay ("Not a Cough in a Carload: Images Used By Tobacco Companies To Hide the Hazards of Smoking") and their related presentations and press interviews, to my much-earlier, virtually identical, and still-circulating exhibition ("When More Doctors Smoked Camels: A Century of Health Claims in Cigarette Advertising," which debuted at the Texas Medical Center Library in 1988) and to my extensive body of published work on this precise subject.

I deeply appreciate your interest in reviewing my grievance and in exploring the possibility of seeking a fair resolution.

As we discussed, I consider this a serious matter of academic integrity that I assumed would be addressed and remedied by Dr. Jackler following an exchange of phone calls, emails, and letters beginning in March 2007 after several colleagues in the field of tobacco control had alerted me to what they believed was plagiarism of my work. They had either read an article in *The San Francisco Chronicle* on February 28, 2007 about the Stanford individuals' exhibit or had attended a related presentation by Robert Proctor. I am enclosing a copy of this correspondence along with the same detailed documentation of my work over a 30-year period that I sent to Dr. Jackler and the Lane Medical Library.

Contrary to his conciliatory letter, Dr. Jackler has continued to seek publicity for his exhibit without acknowledging that not only is it not an original idea but it is also virtually identical to an exhibition created by another medical school professor nearly two decades earlier (as well as to that individual's original lectures beginning three decades earlier and to his published peer-reviewed articles on this theme from 1977 to the present). Although Dr. Jackler characterizes

himself as “an accidental tourist in the world of advertising,” the inference by the reader of the articles about the exhibit and by those who visit it is that his work is original.

In our telephone conversation, Dr. Jackler said he had never heard of me or any of my work. That did not inspire confidence in his or Proctor’s scholarship. Regardless, once this was brought to his attention, they were obligated to credit---properly and prominently---the prior work of others. Dr. Jackler also commented to me that his exhibit had “many more ads” than my own, as if to imply that makes it right. In fact, I had selected the images (in most instances displaying them in their original context, to illustrate various points) from a collection of several thousand that I had built over a 15-year period prior to 1988. I would also note that Dr. Jackler’s exhibit and the Stanford-related website provide no new insights that were not previously made in my exhibition, articles, and presentations.

To summarize, I created the exhibition “When More Doctors Smoked Camels” 20 years ago to coincide with the First National Conference on Tobacco Use in America, held at MD Anderson Cancer Center and at which I was invited to give the keynote address on the history of tobacco sponsorship of sports. That exhibition in turn was based on my various peer-reviewed articles on the history of cigarette advertising in medical journals, my three illustrated theme issues on the tobacco pandemic (at the *Medical Journal of Australia* on March 5, 1983 and at the *New York State Journal of Medicine* in December 1983 and July 1985), my invited essay for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica Medical Annual* in 1982, and countless invited lectures on the history of cigarette advertising at nearly every medical school in the US (including at Stanford on several occasions). Versions of the exhibition have been on display at upwards of 20 libraries, medical schools, and universities, and a traveling version is still available. Moreover, a large selection from the exhibition was on display at the National Museum of Health and Medicine for one year in 2006-7 alongside my more recent exhibition, “Cartoonists Take Up Smoking.”

As I mentioned to you, at the time I created the exhibition, medical schools were still receiving considerable research funding from the tobacco industry, which also had influence over NIH grants. Moreover, the mass media, including *The New York Times*, were still covetous of cigarette advertising. (The Times stopped accepting cigarette ads only in 1999, by which time most such advertising had shifted away from the print media.) So the fact that the Stanford exhibit that first went on view in 2007 (by which time it had become commonplace to demonize “Big Tobacco”) does not credit the

pioneering such exhibition on this subject when a certain degree of risk-taking was involved further demeans my historical contribution.

I am hardly alone in my objections. I have been made aware of a highly critical review of a book proposal by the Stanford individuals, which they submitted even after I had informed them my original work. Dr. Gregory Connolly of Harvard School of Public Health and former director of the Massachusetts tobacco control program, who was one of the first to call the exhibit and presentation to my attention in 2007, is equally upset by Jackler's and Proctor's persistent failure to cite the work of others. And Benjamin Rapaport, the leading authority on antiquarian tobacciana, has written to commiserate with me over the unmerited recognition the Stanford individuals have received for their duplicative effort.

I realize that if one claims to have not been aware of another's work, then plagiarism may not be the correct term to apply. At the same time, ignorance is no excuse for inadequate scholarship. Were a high school student to seek recognition for work that had previously been done by others, he or she would be reprimanded. The same should apply to university professors.

Again, thank you for considering my concerns. As you surmised, the proper protocol in museum exhibitions is to cite prior exhibitions on the same subject. I do hope that, at a minimum, appropriate retroactive and prospective attribution will be given to my work by Stanford, and that all past and prospective venues for "Not a Cough in a Carload" will be notified, as well as all media outlets that have covered the exhibit. I also would like an apology.

Sincerely,

Alan Blum, MD
Professor and Endowed Chair in Family Medicine
Director, The University of Alabama
Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society



November 21, 2008

Alan Blum, M.D.
Professor and Endowed Chair in Family Medicine
Director, The University of Alabama Center for the
Study of Tobacco and Society
The University of Alabama Health Sciences
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Dear Dr. Blum:

I am responding to the concern you expressed regarding whether Stanford faculty members, Robert Jackler, M.D., Professor and Chair of Otolaryngology and Robert Proctor, Ph.D., Professor of History, properly acknowledged your exhibit ("When More Doctors Smoked Camels: A Century of Health Claims in Cigarette Advertising") in their recent exhibit, ("Not a Cough in a Carload: Images Used By Tobacco Companies to Hide the Hazards of Smoking"). In addition to the information you provided in our conversation, I have reviewed your letter dated October 29, 2008 and the written materials you submitted. I contacted some of the individuals who you referred me to in your letter and your email. I have spoken to Professor Jackler and reviewed materials sent by email from both Professors Jackler and Proctor. I have further sought opinions from both the Director of the Lane Library of the Stanford School of Medicine and from curators at the Stanford University Cantor Art Museum regarding protocols and guidelines for citing and acknowledging the organizers of an exhibition.

Thank you for bringing your work and your exhibition materials to my attention. I read the materials with great interest. I commend and applaud you for your longstanding and ongoing efforts to call attention to the impact of advertising on tobacco use, and to promote good health practices, particularly among physicians. I support cooperation and collaboration among the researchers and others involved in efforts to curb the use of tobacco and protect against the health impacts of direct and second smoke.

As you note in your letter, this is not a matter of plagiarism because Professors Jackler and Proctor were not aware of your prior museum, library and university exhibitions, and did not use or rely on them in the development of their recent exhibition. Nor is it a matter of improper exclusion of a reference. I note, for example, that Professor Jackler's written article ("Not One Case of Throat Irritation": Misuse of the Image of the Otolaryngologist in Cigarette Advertising," *Laryngoscope*, 118: March 2008 refers to your article, "When 'more doctors smoked Camels'; cigarette advertising in the journal. *NY State J Med* 1983; 1347-1352). Professor Proctor also informs me that he cites (and

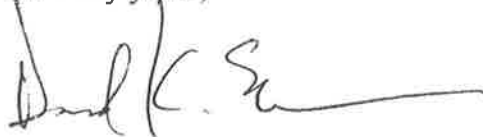
quotes) your work on tobacco and sports in several places in his forthcoming book on the global history of tobacco (e.g., your 1988 paper, "Tobacco Industry Sponsorship of Sports: A Growing Dependency"); he also informs me that you are listed not only in the bibliography of his forthcoming book, but also in his acknowledgements.

The fact that the material for which you seek acknowledgment is an exhibition of images adds an additional layer of complication. Images and themes recur in a wide variety of museum exhibits shown in different places and at different times. As one of our curators wrote me: "Lots of subjects get repeated treatment: how many museums, for example, have mounted unheralded Rembrandt shows, for example, or 'portraits from the permanent collection' shows, etc.? It would be foolish to believe that each is beholden to the previous." In contrast to scholarly publications, exhibits, particularly from non-museum venues, may not even have reference lists. Finally, an exhibit is frequently about public display, and not necessarily original scholarship.

Attribution is of considerable consequence in scholarly work. Acknowledgments represent an author's judgment of who influenced or contributed to their written work. There must be compelling, objective data for a third person, such as a dean, to substitute his own perspective for that of the investigator. Exhibits, by their very nature, present even greater ambiguities than written works. For these reasons, I have concluded that whether the exhibition should acknowledge your past exhibits is not an appropriate decision for me to dictate. I personally commend you on your contributions to this field, and I wish you continued success in your work.

I know that Professors Jackler and Proctor share your passion to abate the tobacco catastrophe. My hope is that you will seek ways to support each other in this important and worthwhile effort.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David K. Stevenson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

David K. Stevenson, M.D.
Harold K. Faber Professor of Pediatrics
Vice Dean and Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs
Stanford University School of Medicine
Director, Charles B. and Ann L. Johnson Center for
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cc: Robert K. Jackler, M.D.
Robert N. Proctor, Ph.D.