

Global plan on tobacco

AN innovative strategy to mobilise a global campaign against tobacco and smoking has been hailed as the most important single initiative arising from the Conference.

Conference organising committee chairman Mike Daube said the Trade for Life campaign would be a major national and international effort.

It resulted from action by the American Cancer Society, which convened a preparatory working party of anti-tobacco people who developed the plan. Launching it at the Conference, ACS chief executive officer William Tipping said the first and most immediate goal was to start a global lobbying campaign to bring the moral force of world opinion to bear on immoral trade policies in the US.

One catalyst to global outrage and action was the action of the US trade

representative in promoting US cigarette exports to South-East Asia. The governments of Japan, South Korea and Taiwan all reacted to the threat of US retaliation against their exports by lifting import restrictions and allowing the aggressive advertising of US tobacco products. The promotion of cigarettes in these markets surged and, for the first time, marketing has been directly targeted at women, who traditionally have low smoking rates in these countries.

The latest case, which will be taken up by Trade for Life, focuses on Thailand where the Government is resisting the lifting of import restrictions on US cigarettes and the removal of the country's advertising ban, sought by the US Cigarette Export Association. The matter has been referred to GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) and is seen as a test

case which will affect the cigarette trade worldwide.

The global plan includes a series of follow-on actions, designed to encourage exporting countries to reduce world trade in tobacco products and curb the marketing aggression of transnational tobacco companies (TTCs).

The second part of the plan consists of a strategy to place tobacco control at the top of the agenda of international governmental and non-governmental health and development organisations. This stage will involve the UN, raise the priority given to tobacco control by WHO and ensure that "international development agencies promote healthy agriculture instead of killer tobacco".

"The third part of the plan lists a series of broad measures designed to guide, assist and strengthen the resolve and capacity of targeted countries themselves to resist the TTCs."

Laughter is still the best medicine



Many of the ads in this publication are misleading, deceptive and/or a rip off. For example, smoking does not make one glamorous, macho, successful, or athletic. It does make one sick, poor and dead.

We care about you and your health. Love, **Doc**



Stickers can be used on magazines in airlines and waiting rooms.

DOCTORS can help fight the smoking epidemic in surgeries, schools and the community by using humorous posters that make a mockery

of cigarette advertisements, says an American medical activist.

Dr Alan Blum, of the department of family medicine at the Baylor College of Medicine in Texas, said doctors should have fun with the issue, and dare to defeat tobacco companies on their own terms. "We are not laughing them out of town, we are not making fools of them, the fools that they already are," he said.

Dr Blum said that the message he gave to each medical, dental, nursing and public health student at his medical school was that even as students, and most assuredly later on when they are fully qualified, they can have a genuine impact on the prevention of disease both in what they do in the surgery, clinic or hospital as well as in the role they choose to play in the community at large.

"I'm not just talking about going into the schools and giving lectures but outside the schools in the context of where children are and like to be. Old habits die hard and too many doctors still believe that their only place is in the examining room.

"But almost all of our patients' self-education comes from television and the mass media." Dr Blum said patients did not read medical journals but TV weeklies and women's magazines, with cigarette advertising throughout. He said it was time to start hitting back at such magazines, and his group, DOC (Doctors Ought to Care), had produced stickers which could be slapped onto the front cover of such magazines in airlines and waiting rooms. The stickers read: "Many of the ads in this magazine are misleading, deceptive and/or a rip off. For example, smoking does not make one glamorous, macho, successful, or athletic. It does make one sick, poor and dead."

Dr Blum said he did not know of a single course in any medical school or public health school in the US devoted to the epidemiology of smoking or how to confront the issue. "This is not a static concept, that if you give people information they will act on it and therefore things will improve. The tobacco industry is a dynamic one and we have to track it as a parasitic disease.

"Our biggest enemy is complacency: that we are winning the war against tobacco." He said doctors needed to move beyond patient education and into health promotion and medical activism.

Dr Blum said the group DOC was founded in 1977 to educate the public, especially young people, about the major preventable causes of poor health and high medical costs. "We employ paid mass media and we rely on humour — our motto is 'Laughing the Pushers out of Town,'" he said. "It is a multi-layered, reinforcing strategy and is the only one I know of in the world. We work in the office, schools and mass media and we pay our own way."

Although pharmaceutical companies were producing nicotine patches and gum, they had done nothing to finance stands against the pandemic of smoking. Similarly, hospitals did very little, he said.

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