

## **The Philip Morris Genome Project: A Strategy for Tracking and Addressing Troubling Collaborations with the World's Largest Cigarette Company**

*Background:* Beginning in the 1980s, tobacco control efforts shifted from school classroom-based and clinic-based education about the dangers of smoking to direct confrontation of the tobacco industry. But cigarette manufacturers also evolved by developing innovative promotional campaigns, adopting new corporate identities, and forging alliances with other industries, universities, and even charitable health organizations. In spite of increasing regulatory restrictions on public smoking and cigarette advertising, the tobacco industry remains dynamic, resilient, and profitable.

*Methods:* To document the extent of the commercial, political, academic, and cultural ties cultivated by the world's leading cigarette manufacturer, Philip Morris, a nearly 40-year "genomic" analysis has been conducted involving daily monitoring of the global business press; monthly review of tobacco industry trade publications; scrutiny of annual corporate reports and travel to 20 annual shareholders' meetings; attendance at international tobacco industry expositions; and observation of over 200 company-sponsored sports, arts, and ethnic minority cultural events.

*Results:* 48 Philip Morris manufacturing facilities in 32 countries produce 800 billion cigarettes yearly for 180 markets. A pioneer sponsor on the new medium of television in the 1950s, the company circumvented the 1971 ban on TV advertising of cigarettes by creating sporting events that were internationally televised. By acquiring beer and food companies in the 1980s, Philip Morris retained influence over the mass media, covetous of advertising revenue. In 2002 the company changed its name to Altria to diminish the tobacco stigma. It makes the world's top-selling cigarette, Marlboro, and holds 28% of the global market, excluding China. The company has an extensive network of alliances with agricultural, chemical, pharmaceutical, financial, packaging, entertainment, shipping, drugstore-chain, supermarket-chain, marketing, and technology companies, plus ties to hundreds of museums, arts organizations, universities, libraries, and charities combating problems such as AIDS, domestic violence, hunger, and illiteracy.

*Conclusion and Caution:* Greater recognition by health professionals and the public alike of the depth and breadth of the alliances in the Philip Morris genome is essential to progress in tobacco control. However, the purpose of this ongoing project is to document not only the aliases of Philip Morris but also concrete examples of the impact that these identifies have had on efforts to curb tobacco use and promotion. For while the company has changed and evolved, most antismoking organizations have not—choosing to react only to obvious actions such as a new cigarette brand but fearful of exposing, criticizing, or confronting the federal and state agencies, elected officials, health organizations, medical societies, universities, and hospitals that continue their financial relationships with Philip Morris or its subsidiaries while otherwise claiming to be anti-smoking. Philip Morris' strong support of FDA regulation of tobacco and its Foundation for a Smoke Free World (a proponent of "tobacco harm reduction" and funder of scientific research) are just two examples of how the company disarms critics. Knowing the history of willful, ongoing cooperation with health entities is essential to understanding the success of Philip Morris. The failure to shame individuals and organizations that collaborate with tobacco companies and subsidiaries inhibits tobacco control efforts.

**Learning Objective #1:** Participants will be able to list 3 examples of collaborations between Philip Morris and healthcare institutions, medical societies, and universities.

**Learning Objective #2:** Participants will be able to name three major health-related corporations with extensive business relationships with Philip Morris.

**Learning Objective #3:** Participants will be able to describe three examples of alliances between Philip Morris and health care entities that ended when they were revealed.