"Precious baby"

MARY ANN CROMER, MD

You've become accustomed to seeing magazine and newspaper articles that say that smoking can harm your unborn child. Studies do show that smoking mothers, on the average, have slightly lighter weight babies. Yet with more women reportedly smoking, infant mortality rates keep reaching historic lows. Some studies have shown that the lighter babies of smoking mothers actually have better survival rates than similar weight babies of nonsmokers.

> -from The Cigarette Controversy, a pamphlet distributed by The Tobacco Institute, 1776 K Street NW, Washington, DC 20006

"PRECIOUS BABY," read the T-shirt of the very pregnant young woman in the Newark, New Jersey, airport. Yet there she sat dragging luxuriously on a Virginia Slims, supplying herself and her desired child-to-be with a dose of nicotine, carbon monoxide, hydrogen cyanide, DDT, and benzopyrene. No one screamed, "Stop!" or "Please don't!" No one murmured, "Disgusting!" or "How Sad." No one was discussing the contradiction between her chosen wearing apparel and her cigarette. In fact, I appeared to be the only one shaking my head in dismay at this remarkably ironic behavior. Could I have been the only one who noticed or wondered, "Does this woman have a doctor?"

It is naive to suggest that smoking by a pregnant woman in 1983 is a choice made by an informed adult, when every effort is being made by cigarette companies to undermine knowledge about the adverse effects of smoking on the fetus and on the mother herself. Indeed, surveys1-5 have repeatedly demonstrated that when compared with those who have never smoked or who formerly smoked, persons who smoke are ignorant of the probability and severity of cigarette-caused damage. The media, especially magazines directed to women, have done little to educate. While purporting to promote the status of women, these publications contribute to their ignorance by censoring articles that would inform readers about the disproportionate health problems caused by smoking. Perhaps the most striking example is Ms. magazine, published by Gloria Steinem. Its May 1983 issue was devoted entirely to the topic of women's health—but without a clear emphasis on the leading cause of preventable disease and death in women: cigarettes. In its 13-year existence, Ms. has never published an article on smoking, but has carried hundreds of pages of cigarette

advertising.

In a similar vein, athletes like Billy Jean King, Martina Navratilova, and Renee Richards, MD-who could be doing so much to encourage healthier lifestyles among teenage girls—may be assisting Philip Morris' efforts to "liberate" women by promoting cigarette dependence. They participate in tennis matches promoted with the demeaning slogan, "Virginia Slims. You've come a long way, baby."

For too long, the tobacco industry has gone unchallenged by women with its exploitation of the misconception that slimness allegedly due to smoking is preferable to a nonsmoking lifestyle. Alton Ochsner, MD, used to comment, "Who wants to be a svelte corpse?" but his quote never made the billboards at the tennis matches.

It is small wonder why cigarette companies fear the growing number of nonsmokers' rights groups led by GASP (Group Against Smoking Pollution) and ASH (Action on Smoking and Health). In the long run, the social unacceptability of smoking, which is implicit in these groups' objectives, will succeed in cutting cigarette sales. (A memorandum distributed to tobacco executives during a clean indoor-air referendum in California in 1978 made note of the fact that if every individual who smokes were to smoke just one less cigarette per day, R.J. Reynolds alone would lose \$92 million in sales each year. 6) In addition, the high visibility and increasing involvement of women in nonsmokers' rights groups provide hope that magazine publishers who unite with cigarette companies to exploit women will see fewer and fewer women buying their publications.

To this end, organizations such as the American Medical Women's Association, NOW (National Organization of Women), the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, the American Academy of Pediatrics, national and local PTAs (Parent-Teacher Associations), and women's religious and civic organizations must do more-far more—than they have done to stop the assault on girls and women by cigarette advertisers.

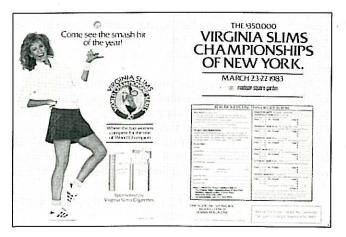
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Dr. Cromer is a pediatrician. Address correspondence to Dr Cromer, Somerville Hospital, Somerville, MA 02143.







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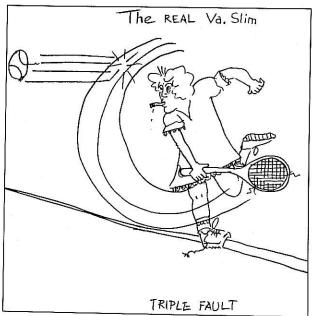
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Women top cig target

line. See Page 4.





"Women top cig target" reads the headline in Advertising Age, September 28, 1981 (top R) and the message is clear: cigarette makers will go to great lengths to create imagery that glorifies the woman who smokes. An advertisement in the United States Tobacco Journal (middle L) lacks the health warning, as do many advertisements in store displays. The advertisement for the Virginia Slims Ginny Jogger suit (middle R) may be the only fitness ad ever with a health warning at the bottom. While Philip Morris touts its Virginia Slims tennis tournament at \$20 a ticket (bottom L) a group of medical students at the University of Miami protested the tournament in 1978 and created a poster (bottom R) of the real Va. Slim. Yes, Virginia, there is a lung cancer.