Advocating for tobacco-free pharmacies: Past and current efforts

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Introduction

There are more than 56,000 pharmacies in the United States. Most (39,000+) of these pharmacies are owned and operated by national pharmacy corporations, supermarkets, or discount stores; and almost all of them still sell tobacco products. This is in stark contrast to the 17,000 independents, most of which long ago stopped selling tobacco.

Pharmacy corporations claim to care about your health, but ...

Tobacco sales in pharmacies:

- Represent a conflict of interest acknowledged even by the pharmacy corporations
- Make it difficult for pharmacists to credibly counsel smoking cessation since the establishment for which they work sells tobacco products
- Implicitly associate tobacco products with good health and contribute to the normalization of its use
- Account for > 4% of all cigarettes sold in USA
- Occur primarily in chain pharmacies, rather than in independent pharmacies

Highlights in the struggle against pharmacy tobacco sales

1971
American Pharmacists Association adopts statement that pharmacies should not sell tobacco

1985
Doctors Ought to Care (DOC) calls for an end to pharmacy tobacco sales in "Pharmacists who dispense cigarettes" (NY State J of Medicine 1985; 85:350-353)

1995
The California Medical Association Foundation launches its Pharmacy Partnership Project (in 2000 this became Prescription for Change)

2004
WHO Informal Meeting adopts statement that health professionals will "prohibit the sale or promotion of tobacco products on their premises"

2008
San Francisco and Boston are the first cities in USA to ban tobacco sales in pharmacies

2010
- Saskatchewan province in Canada passes ban. Only two provinces - British Columbia and Manitoba still permit tobacco sales in pharmacies.
- San Francisco expands its ban to include larger establishments that operate pharmacies, such as grocery stores and department stores

2012
Twenty-five cities and towns in the state of Massachusetts have pharmacy tobacco sales bans

TobaccofreeRx

An organization of pharmacists, pharmacy school and medical school faculty, pharmacy students, nurses, physicians and medical students, attorneys, and health advocates whose goal is to end the sale of tobacco products in pharmacies.

Various strategies are employed:
- Lobby for legislative bans
- Expose the hypocrisy of the pharmacy corporations
- Expose inaction by insurance companies
- Advocate for differential reimbursement of pharmacies by insurance companies, depending on whether they sell tobacco products or not
- Raise tobacco retailer license fees for health care facilities that choose to sell tobacco
- Counter-advertising:

Conclusions

- Ending pharmacy tobacco sales will decrease its availability and contribute to de-normalizing its use.

About this poster

- For presentation at the World Conference on Tobacco or Health, Singapore, March 23, 2012. Abstract G03-P239.
- The following are registered trademarks of their respective corporations or organizations: CVS/pharmacy logo (CVS/Caremark corporation), Walgreens/The Pharmacy America Trusts (Walgreens Co), AHA/Learn and Live (AHA).
- The website screenshots or logos of Safeway, America Trusts (Walgreens Co), AHA/Learn and Live (AHA).
- The contributions of our Board of Advisors of TobaccofreeRx and of Julia Purpane is gratefully acknowledged. For info, please see Tobaccofree.org

Fig 1. Historical advertisement for cigarettes in the Saturday Evening Post, Jan 1929. Drug Company Vice President of the Reynolds Tobacco company in the 1920s was the largest drugstore operator in the United States.

Fig 2. Image of the electronic billboard at a CVS/pharmacy advertising a carton of Marlboro cigarettes.

Fig 3. CVS/pharmacy promotes blood pressure and cholesterol testing so that customers can “pump-outer [their] journey to a healthier heart.” [Screenshot 2012]

Fig 4. “We promote healthy and well living and certainly the Heart Walk promotes both.” – Marlin Hutchens, a Vice President at Walgreens

Fig 5. “CVS/pharmacy, Walgreens and the American Heart Association...we promote healthy and well living and certainly the Heart Walk promotes both.”

Fig 6. Some CVS/pharmacy stores operate a “Minute Clinic,” a walk-in clinic for patients. [Screenshot 2012]

Fig 7. An ad carried by the Pharmacy Partnership of the California Medical Association Foundation. [Accessed 2012]

Fig 8. “Cigarettes promise you a better tomorrow. But they rob you of a healthy future.” – John Wayne

Fig 9. CVS/pharmacy or Walgreens pharma store may contain tobacco products in pharmacies.

Fig 10. "To help a person quit he or she must know: why they started, how to quit, and that there is help to quit.” – American Heart Association [accessed Feb 2012]

Fig 11. "Let’s make every store a smoke-free pharmacy." – TobaccofreeRx.org

Fig 12. "To get a prescription smoked go to state Rx.

Fig 13. "To help a person quit he or she must know: why they started, how to quit, and that there is help to quit.” – American Heart Association [accessed Feb 2012]