

INTRODUCTION: WHAT WE NOW KNOW

Cigarette smoking remains the most avoidable cause of premature death and disease in the US. Yet over 40% of patients who smoke say they have not been advised by a health professional to stop.

- Although nearly all adults and teenagers know that cigarette smoking causes lung cancer, most don't realize that it takes an even greater toll on the heart. Since the 1980s smoking has been recognized as the major preventable risk factor for heart disease, which is the leading cause of death for men and women across most racial and ethnic groups.
- 130,000 Americans who smoke die of lung cancer each year, but more than 200,000 of the 650,000 deaths from heart disease are attributed to cigarette smoking. This doesn't include smoking-related cardiovascular conditions such as stroke, aortic aneurysm, and peripheral vascular disease.
- 75% of heart attacks in women under 50 are attributed to cigarette smoking, which depletes the estrogen that helps lower blood pressure and cholesterol.
- Filtered cigarettes, introduced in the 1950s to allay fears about lung cancer, do not reduce the risk for cancer or heart disease.

WHEN DID WE SUSPECT A PROBLEM?



Advertisement for
The Strongfort
System, *National
Police Gazette*,
May 19, 1917



Advertisement
for Girard cigars,
1920

“The tobacco heart has been named and is well known by its name, but its nature is not well known. We are very much in the dark as to its pathology...[Citing Sir Thomas Lewis in *Diseases of the Heart Described for Practitioners and Students*:] ‘It is suspected, but not proved that heavy tobacco smoking can lead to the degeneration of the arteries including the coronary vessels.’”

--ES Cornwell, MD: The Tobacco Heart, *Medical Times*, Volume 62, Pages 209-211, 1934.



WHEN DID WE KNOW?

As with lung cancer, the dramatic rise in heart disease in the US paralleled the rise in cigarette smoking. But **despite published evidence of the link between smoking and heart disease in the 1920s and 1930s and alarms raised by cardiologists and chest surgeons in the 1940s, the American Medical Association (AMA) failed to urge the public to give up cigarettes.** At that time, 2/3's of MDs smoked. From the 1920s to the 1960s, medical journals and magazines alike published cigarette ads with slogans such as “After a man's heart” and “Inhale to your heart's content!”



Advertisements
for Chesterfield
cigarettes in
LIFE Magazine
and *New York
State Journal of
Medicine*, 1937



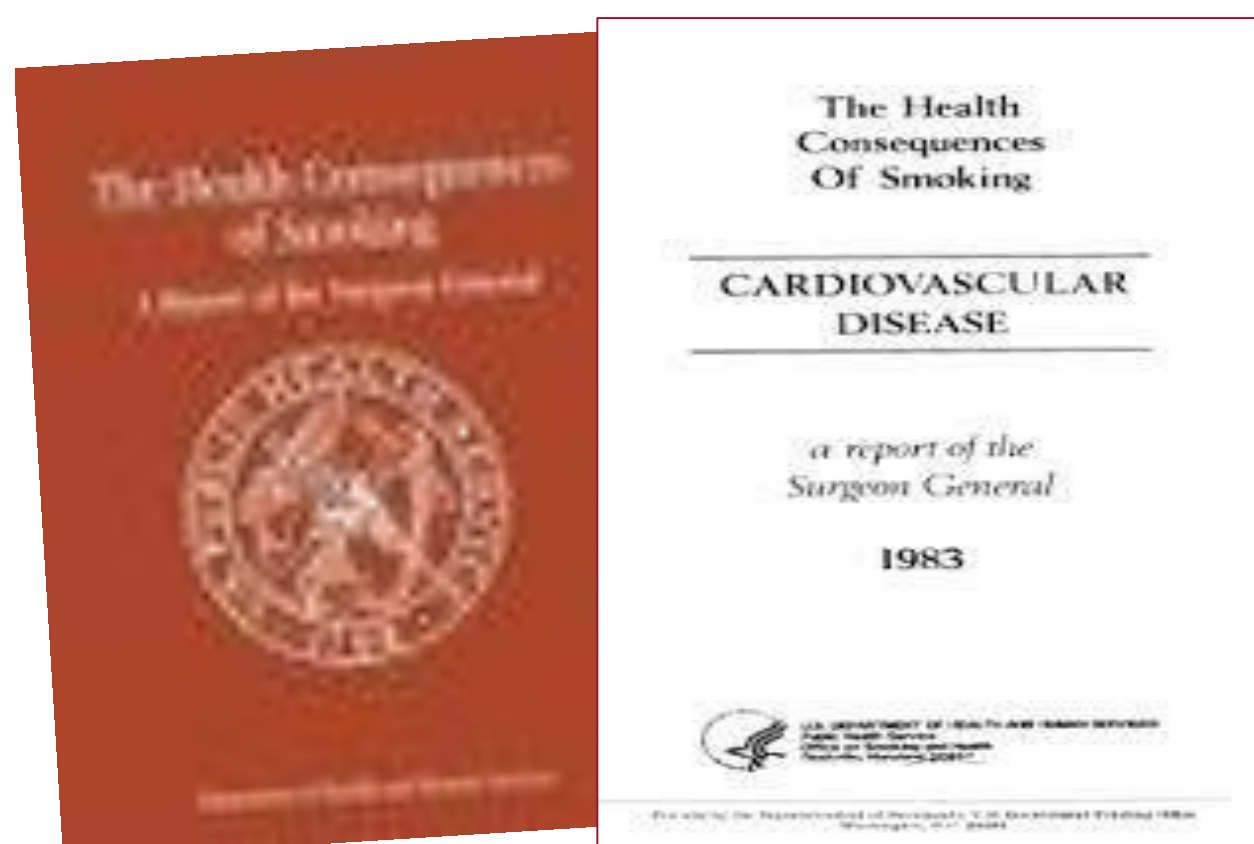
Advertisement
for Embassy
cigarettes, 1949

“The first major prospective study results were made public in 1954 in the United States by Hammond and Horn and found a strong association between cigarette use among men and coronary heart disease (CHD). Overall, smokers were found to carry a 70 percent greater risk of dying from CHD than nonsmokers; heavy smokers had CHD mortality rates almost 2 1/2 times greater than non-smokers. Hammond and Horn also noted a consistent dose-response relationship with the number of cigarettes consumed per day...”

“Each of the three major risk factors poses approximately the same increase in risk of CHD for the person with the risk factor, but cigarette smoking is far more prevalent as a risk factor for CHD in the American population than either hypertension or elevated serum cholesterol. Thus, the overall finding of this Report is clear:

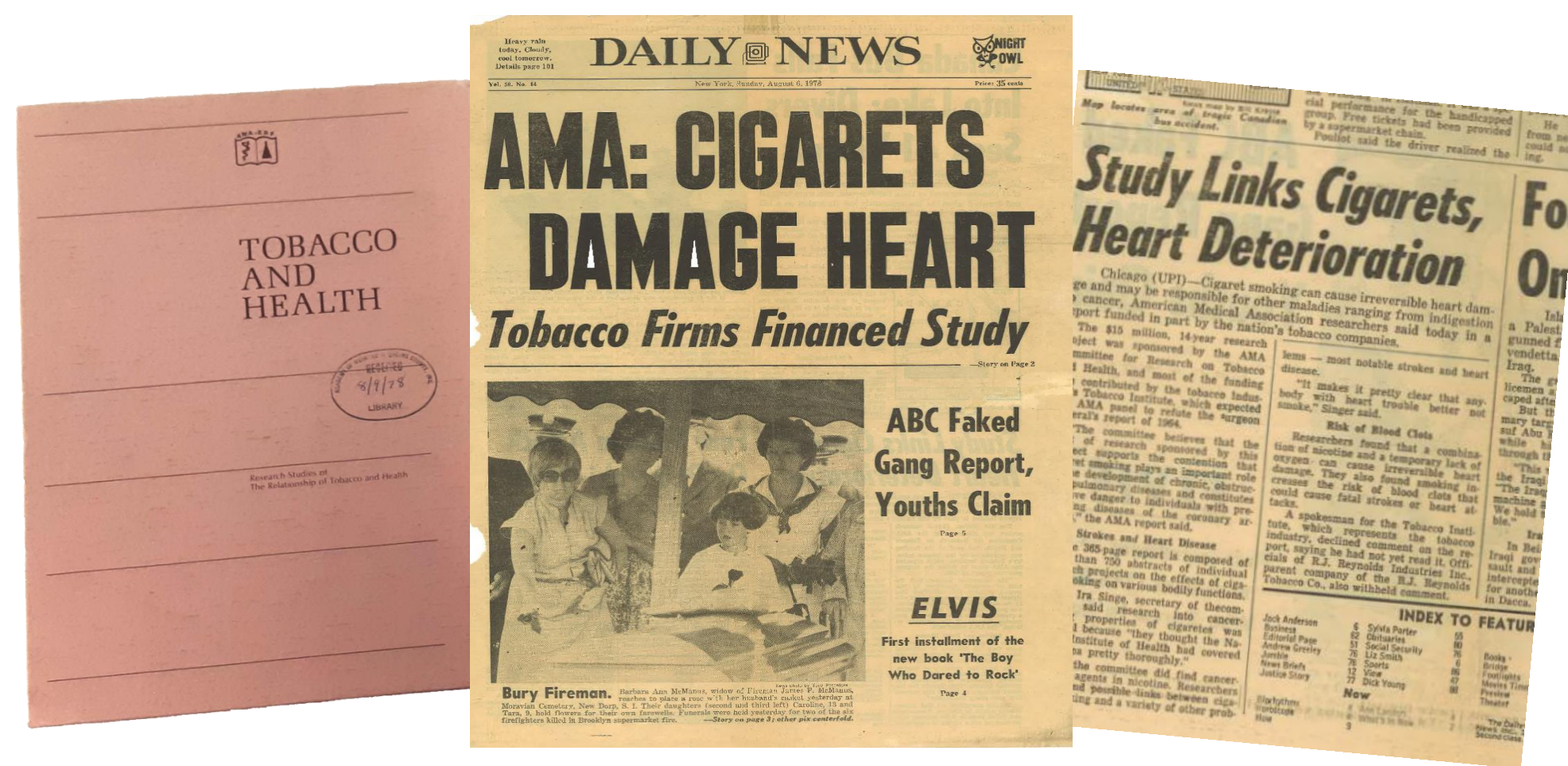
Cigarette smoking should be considered the most important of the known modifiable risk factors for coronary heart disease in the United States...

--*The Health Consequences of Smoking—Cardiovascular Disease: A Report of the Surgeon General*. United States Public Health Service, 1983.



WHAT DID WE DO ABOUT IT?

In 1964, rather than joining with other major health groups to endorse the Surgeon General's Report on Smoking and Health and to support actions to curb cigarette consumption, **the American Medical Association accepted \$10 million from six cigarette manufacturers to support “independent research” for the “identification and removal of harmful components in tobacco.”** In 1978, after having contributed little to the fight against smoking, the AMA confirmed in its report, *Tobacco and Health*, that cigarettes cause lung cancer and heart disease.



WHAT MORE CAN MEDICAL SCHOOLS DO?

Although medical students are taught to offer brief stop-smoking advice to patients and to prescribe medications that can help some to stop, there is little opportunity in most medical school curricula for developing proficiency in motivational interviewing and behavioral modification. **Urgently needed are continuity-of-care experiences with patients from the beginning of the first year of medical school and continuing until graduation, then throughout residency training.**

Involvement in community-wide health promotion is also needed. Founded as an extracurricular activity for medical students and residents to teach high school and junior high students about smoking and other killer habits through parodies of ads for cigarettes and other harmful products, Doctors Ought to Care (DOC) brought humor to health education in the clinic, classroom, and community at over 100 medical schools from 1977 to 2002. Reviving DOC's engaging approach could help reverse emerging public health problems such as obesity, gun violence, and vaccine refusal.



DOC parody of
Winston cigarette
advertisement, 1978

WHAT MORE CAN GOVERNMENT DO?

Although billions of dollars have been spent on heart disease research, resulting in advances such as transplants, pacemakers, and medications, funding for **ad campaigns in print, broadcast, and social media aimed at preventing heart disease by stopping smoking or never taking up cigarettes** totals less than a penny for every thousand dollars spent by tobacco companies to promote cigarettes. Only in 2012 did the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention begin purchasing TV ads for its “TIPS From Former Smokers” campaign— but for just 18 weeks a year and at a cost equal to 3 days of the tobacco industry's annual advertising budget.

THE HALF-HEARTED MEDIA

Cigarette advertising featured prominently in most issues of the influential news magazines from their inception in the 1920s and 1930s. This made for numerous ironic juxtapositions of **front cover stories on heart disease and back cover advertisements for cigarettes**, including these three two-faced examples from the Center's collection. The cover stories seldom emphasized the dangers of smoking to the heart.



“Coronary artery: Closing in on life,” *New York Times Magazine*, March 25, 1973



“How to Reverse Heart Disease,” *US News & World Report*, August 6, 1990



“Women & Heart Disease,” *TIME*, April 25, 2003

WHAT MORE CAN BUSINESS DO?

Companies can put public health over profits from selling cigarettes. For example, February has been designated “American Heart Month” by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the American Heart Association, and numerous corporate sponsors to promote heart disease research and public awareness of the modifiable risk factors for heart disease: high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and cigarette smoking. What message is American Heart Month sponsor Walgreens sending by continuing to sell cigarettes in its 9000 pharmacies—or Walmart in its 4,743 stores, Dollar General (17,266 stores), Piggly Wiggly (500 stores), Pilot Flying (650 truck stops), Publix (1294 stores), Kroger (2300 stores) and Winn-Dixie (529 stores)? They should follow the lead of successful companies such as CVS, Aldi, Trader Joe's, Target, and Fresh Market, which have either stopped selling cigarettes or never sold them at all.