Letters intended for publication should be a maximum of 500 words, 10 references, and one table or figure, and should be sent to the editor at the address given on the inside front cover. Those responding to articles or correspondence published in the journal should be received within six weeks of publication.

**LETTERS**

**Listening between the lines: what BAT really thinks of its consumers in the developing world**

In an audio recording of the “Structured Creativity Conference” held in Hampshire, UK in June 1984, British American Tobacco (BAT) adds context to the written report of marketing and product applications. Employees are taped brainstorming creative ways to push their product in light of future marketing constraints and social pressure towards a smoke-free society. Project proposals included the “front end lift” cigarette design to give the smoker more “impact” on the first puff, ‘pleasant smelling sidestream smoke’, and ‘forget about smoking...GO FOR A QUICKIE’.

Ross’s later became the head of international brand from Ian Ross from a Finland subsidiary, who relates a meeting with John Turner: “We could sell them to the Palestinians if we have no idea what the psychographics of the average black farmer is. ”

What is of great interest to those of us who spend our time searching through page after page of internal tobacco industry documents is the significant difference between what is written and what is said. David Schechter, the former BAT lawyer, recently explained the “mental copy rule” to the US Department of Justice, which assumed that anything one wrote could end up being used publicly or legally against the company.

This leads to the obvious question: Are we overlooking important research tools in the form of non-written material?

**M E Muggli**
**R D Hurt**

St Paul, Minnesota, USA

Correspondence to: Monique E Muggli, 1345 Osceola Avenue, St Paul, MN 55105, USA; mmuggli@attbi.com

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**Eclipse: does it live up to its health claims?**

We read the recent article by Slade et al1 with great interest and agree that reasonable regulation focused on the development and appropriate evaluation of potential reduced risk cigarettes is warranted. Furthermore, we agree with Slade et al2 that the results of our evaluation indicate that Eclipse may offer potential benefits to smokers. However, we disagree with several of the other conclusions drawn by the authors.

The article challenges the merits of Eclipse and questions the fundamental differences between Eclipse and other cigarettes. It is not possible within the context of the letter either to fully describe the scientific data that has been developed to characterise Eclipse or to address many of the criticisms of the claims raised in Slade’s article. However, we briefly address pertinent issues below and encourage interested parties to independently evaluate all of the available information.

Slade et al3 have inaccurately represented the claims that RJ Reynolds Tobacco Company (RJRT) has made regarding Eclipse. No cigarette is without risk, including Eclipse. Our advertising for Eclipse states: “The best choice for smokers who worry about their health is to quit. But Eclipse is the next best choice for those who have decided to continue smoking.” Our advertising also makes it clear that RJRT does not claim that Eclipse is the least risk of cardiovascular disease or complications with pregnancy.

In the absence of any existing regulatory standard, RJRT assessed Eclipse’s risk reduction potential using a four step scientific methodology that included chemical testing and analysis, biological and toxicological testing, human testing, and independent scientific verification. In general, the evaluation strategy utilised was consistent with strategies outlined by the Institute of Medicine Committee that addressed this subject.4 RJRT has conducted an extensive comparative evaluation of Eclipse and has presented this research at scientific meetings in the both the USA and internationally. The results of these and other studies may be reviewed on the Eclipse website (www.eclipsescience.com).

In addition, much of this research has been published in the peer reviewed literature. The weight of the evidence from this research clearly shows that, compared to other cigarettes, Eclipse may present smokers with less risk of cancer, chronic bronchitis, and possibly pneumonia.5–7

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**References**


Compositions of Eclipse mainstream smoke constituent yields to the yields of very high yielding ultra low “tar” cigarettes (Now Box and Carlton Soft Pack) obtained by machine smoking do not change the fact that Eclipse cigarettes may present smokers with less risk of certain smoking related diseases than other cigarettes. RJRT scientists have recently demonstrated Eclipse is significantly less mutagenic on a per mg “tar” basis than either Carlton Soft Pack or Now Box over a wide range of machine smoking conditions. On a per cigarette basis, Eclipse was less mutagenic than Carlton Soft Pack under all machine smoking conditions tested and was less mutagenic than Now Box when evaluated using the machine smoking conditions mandated by both the Massachusetts Department of Health and the Canadian federal government. In addition, Eclipse was significantly less cytotoxic on both a per mg “tar” basis and a per cigarette basis under the same range of machine smoking conditions.

As noted by Slade et al,3 smokers typically take larger and more frequent puffs than those specified by the US Federal Trade Commission puffing regimen and they typically smoke Eclipse differently than their usual brand. Therefore, it is essential that a weight-of-the-evidence approach, including studies in smokers, be used to characterise potential differences between Eclipse and other cigarettes.4 Urine mutagenicity studies conducted in smokers demonstrate that smokers of ultra low “tar”, full flavour low “tar”, and full flavour “tar” cigarettes all experience substantial, statistically significant reductions (p < 0.05) in mutagen exposure when they switch to Eclipse.5 Furthermore, additional studies conducted in smokers have demonstrated reductions in bronchial inflammation and inflammation of the lower lung when smokers switched to Eclipse.6 *** These findings are consistent with reductions in smoker exposure to smoke constituents under actual smoking conditions and support RJRT’s conclusion that Eclipse may reduce the risks of certain smoking related diseases relative to other cigarettes currently on the market.

**Author’s reply**

Swauger argues that based on the weight of the evidence, Eclipse, compared to other cigarettes, may present smokers with less risk of cancer and other smoking related diseases. He bases this conclusion on “weighing” the scientific research RJ Reynolds Tobacco (RJRT) has conducted on Eclipse. Our study drew the opposite conclusion.7 Our analysis of the Eclipse research suggests that Eclipse is as toxic or more toxic than a number of conventional cigarette brands.

RJRT claims “there is no cigarette like Eclipse” based on a comparison of the smoke chemistry of Eclipse with a typical ultralight, Merit. We tested Eclipse against two other ultralight cigarettes, Now and Carlton, and found the smoke concentrations of four major carcinogens to be higher in Eclipse.8 9 These findings are consistent with reductions in smoker exposure to smoke constituents under actual smoking conditions and support RJRT’s conclusion that Eclipse may reduce the risks of certain smoking related diseases relative to other cigarettes currently on the market.

**References**

1 Slade J, Connolly GN, Lymeris D. Eclipse: does it live up to its health claims? Tobacco Control 2002;11(suppl 1):i64–70.

Cigarette smoking is the leading public health problem in the USA, contributing to over 400 000 deaths a year.10 Given its importance, the tobacco control community should be aware of all significant patterns in the consumption of cigarettes that may be relevant to efforts aimed at tobacco control. Unfortunately, little attention has been paid to the seasonal nature of smoking. Findings on seasonal patterns may have major implications for the timing of interventions designed to manage the tobacco problem, both in the USA and in other countries.

In this letter, monthly data for cigarette sales at the state level for the USA are analysed to test for the presence of seasonality and to characterise the phenomenon. The results reveal a seasonal pattern that is significant both in the statistic sense and in a pragmatic sense. This includes a significant drop in the winter months of January and February, and an increase during the summer months of June, July, and August.11 Because seasonality in sales does not reflect seasonality in production, it must be inferred that the seasonality is driven by wholesale and retail phenomena, including consumption.

The data used in this study are monthly figures for the sales of cigarettes by wholesalers aggregated at the state level between January 1983 and July 2000. Until December 1997, the Tobacco Institute was responsible for their collection.12 For the period following this, the firm Orzechowski and Walker produced the data.13
Two methods were used to examine seasonality. The first was spectral analysis, which identifies cyclical patterns in the data. If a cycle of a particular length is revealed to be statistically different from that produced by a uniform random process (Bartlett’s test), the spectrogram would be significantly (5% level) different from that produced by a uniform random process (table 1, column 2). Using the seasonality analysis, a number of indicators were generated. The values in table 1, column 3 correspond to the factor range (difference between high and low values) for each indicator range (difference between high and low values) for each indicator.

Table 1 Summary statistics on seasonality of cigarette sales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Spectral analysis p value for Bartlett’s test</th>
<th>Stable seasonality test p value</th>
<th>Seasonal factor range</th>
<th>Months with extreme seasonal effects (month name and number of times the month is a high-2 or low-2 seasonal factor)</th>
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*All 34 (17×2) possible occurrences of “high-2” or “low-2” months are represented by the two tied “most frequent” months.†This was confirmed by parallel analyses of production data and discussions with an expert on the production of tobacco.

In percentage terms, the seasonal effect is large—as column 4 shows, the mean annual range (difference between high and low factors) across the 17 years is about 30%. To put this in perspective, assuming a price elasticity of –0.4, a 30% drop in sales would require a 75% increase in cigarette prices.

Next, to identify the months for which sales were uniformly high or low for any state, for any one year cycle in the data, the two months with the highest and the two with the lowest seasonal components were selected, and the frequency of the appearance of the months in the “high-2” and “low-2” months was computed by state. Columns 5–8 show the most frequently appearing high and low months. Figure 1 shows that January and February are a “low-2” season for 42 states, because both January and February appear as a “low-2” month for all states.
sales, and June, July, and August, a “high” season.

Possible causes of seasonality include the effect of climate on smoking behaviour (low in cold weather and high in mild weather, especially in view of now widespread indoor smoking restrictions across the USA), the timing of tax changes (December-January or June-July), the timing of the new fiscal year (June-July), the timing of school year (August-June), and the timing of quitting efforts tied to New Year’s resolutions (December-January). In the obvious extension to this research, the determinants of this potentially important statistical phenomenon will be analysed in detail.

The present findings demonstrate that sales of cigarettes in the USA have a strong seasonal component. This has potential implications for the timing of cessation initiatives and other time dependent policies. The phenomenon of seasonality could hold the key to significant advances in tobacco control and in the management of a leading public health problem.

S Chandra
Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

F J Chaloupka
Department of Economics, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, USA

Correspondence to: Siddharth Chandra, GSPIA, 3R25 Wesley W Posvar Hall, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA 15260, USA; schandra@pitt.edu

Acknowledgments

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3 Orzechowski W, Walker RC. Monthly state-level data on tax-paid cigarette sales. Electronic file provided to Frank Chaloupka. (See also, for example, Orzechowski W, and Walker RC. The tax burden on tobacco: historical compilation, 1999: Arlington, Virginia: Orzechowski and Walker.)


Way-out developments at BATCO

Working in tobacco control, it is easy to get the impression that the tobacco industry is a united front, with all parties carefully avoiding internal divisions that might undermine the greater struggle against the “antis”. However, tobacco industry documents that have been made public as a result of litigation in the USA frequently reveal ruthless competition for market share, as well as intense suspicion about competitors’ activities. This was brought home to us recently when reading a 1977 document on “developments in the scientific field” by Dr Sydney J Green, then British American Tobacco’s (BAT’s) senior scientist for research and development. After several pages of unremarkable reports on industry and external research on low tar cigarettes and smoking and health, Green informed his readers about two “way-out” developments at BAT:

• Way-out development 1: “A way-out development is that of compounds (such as etorphine) which are 10,000 times as effective as analgesics [such as morphine and which are very addictive. It is theoretically possible (if politically unthinkable) to add analytically undetectable quantities of such materials to cigarettes to create brand allegiance. But this thought may suggest the possibility of such compounds occurring naturally.”

We are grateful to Dr Green for clarifying what “brand allegiance” really means for the tobacco industry.

• Way-out development 2: “Another way-out development, which arises from work done in a quite different area, is that it would now be quite feasible and quite inexpensive to produce an unacceptable off-taste in cigarettes from some factories for a prolonged period without approaching nearer than half to one mile.”

In the same spirit of scientific curiosity which no doubt motivated the BATCO researchers, we would be very interested to know the formula for this substance.

On a more serious note, while we were not able to come up with any plausible candidates for a substance that could make way-out development 2 feasible, we are concerned that Green was right about the feasibility of adding etorphine or some other addictive substance to cigarettes.

Green’s report followed an earlier memo from Keith D Kilburn to CI Ayres, expressing...
concern about what BATCO's competitors might be doing to their “low delivery cigarettes” (that is, low machine measured tar and nicotine yield cigarettes) in order to create brand allegiance. Kilburn proposed that a regular etorphine dose of as little as 0.2 µg per dart would be sufficient to create an addictive craving for the source. He also claimed that the required delivery of around 7 ng per cigarette (or around half the delivery of benz[a]pyrene) would be analytically difficult to measure.

Etophrine is a powerful drug with heroin-like effects, which include respiratory failure in the case of overdose. It may be more familiar to the public as “elephant juice”—a veterinary drug with such high potency that a tiny quantity injected from a dart can immobilise an elephant.

The dangers of etorphine to humans have been dramatically demonstrated in accidents during veterinary use, as there have been fatal overdoses to veterinarians attempting to dart large unruly animals. Reputedly, a mere scratch from an etorphine dart has been sufficient in some cases to produce a fatal overdose. As a consequence of these fatalities, veterinarians who are registered to use etorphine must now have an assistant standing by with a dose of an etorphine antagonist in hand.

These observations on the dangers of etorphine underscore Green's and Kilburn’s essential point: very low concentrations of etorphine underscore Green's and Kilburn’s case in 1977, because forensic toxicologists have put considerable effort into developing highly sensitive detection methods. However, in a world market with minimal regulation of cigarette additives and limited testing capacity outside the industry’s own laboratories, we should remain concerned about what the tobacco industry might be willing to do in order to create “brand allegiance”.

W King, R Borland
VicHealth Centre for Tobacco Control, the Cancer Council Victoria, Victoria, Australia

M Christie
Department of Pharmacology and The Medical Foundation, University of Sydney, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

Correspondence to: Bill King, VicHealth Centre for Tobacco Control, the Cancer Council Victoria,
1 Rathdowne St, Carlton, Victoria 3053, Australia;
bill.king@cancervic.org.au

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1 Green SJ, C A C. – Salamanter. S & H item
1 published in research field in 1977.
2. 18 April 1977. Bates No. 110069827. URL: www.tobaccocontrol.org/...design/...PSCE. Of a data based on random sampling, we tried to recreate the consultant’s findings by deliberately introducing biases and incorrect aggregations which we suspected were present in the consultant’s methods. In this way we were able to produce an almost identical set of results from the new data. On the other hand, when we analysed the new data in an appropriate fashion, we predicted a rise of 5% rather than a drop of nearly 11% in catering revenues.

The best means of influencing policy on smoke-free catering venues is to use objective methods. In this way we were able to produce an almost identical set of results from the new data. On the other hand, when we analysed the new data in an appropriate fashion, we predicted a rise of 5% rather than a drop of nearly 11% in catering revenues.

The best means of influencing policy on smoke-free catering venues is to use objective methods. In this way we were able to produce an almost identical set of results from the new data. On the other hand, when we analysed the new data in an appropriate fashion, we predicted a rise of 5% rather than a drop of nearly 11% in catering revenues.

www.tobaccocontrol.com
Figure 1 Participant flow. PAS, patient administration system.

Voodoo cigarillos: bids in disguise?

As part of its routine monitoring of emerging tobacco products, “Trinkets & trash: artifacts of the tobacco epidemic”, a collection of current and historic tobacco marketing (www.trinketsandtrash.org), recently identified a new tobacco product called Voodoo cigarillos. They are exclusively manufactured in India for the US based Kretek International, a specialty tobacco distributor whose exclusive product line includes Djumon clove tobacco, Darshan bidis, and Dreams multi-coloured and flavoured cocktail cigarettes. The Voodoo cigarillos we obtained were flavoured and, as with bidis, consisted of tobacco flakes wrapped in a leaf tied with a small string. Aside from a slightly larger and more uniform cylindrical shape, Voodoo cigarillos appear to be nearly identical to bidis (fig 1). Only the name on the package would identify it as a cigarillo. US federal regulations define a cigar as any roll of tobacco wrapped in leaf tobacco or in any substance containing tobacco. Voodoo cigarillos appear to be wrapped in tendu leaf, which do not naturally contain tobacco.

So, what is this new product a cigarillo or a bidis with new packaging? Federal regulations define a cigarette as any roll of tobacco wrapped in paper or in any substance not containing tobacco. The US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms previously concluded the bidis wrapper did not contain tobacco and, therefore, bidis were subject to the federal cigarette tax. Therefore, bidis were subject to the federal cigarette tax. Similarly, those women who were heavier smokers at their first antenatal booking and a moderate level of interest in stopping smoking among pregnant women would be expected from national data. This is likely to be because of the high number of Asian women in the local population. Encouragingly, those women who were heavier smokers and were therefore eligible for NRT showed most interest in NRT. Around a quarter of the smokers wanting to stop were both eligible in NRT and eligible for NRT. The results indicate a high level of interest in stopping smoking among pregnant women still smoking following their first antenatal booking and a moderate level of interest in using NRT. Fewer women were recorded as smokers at their first antenatal visit than would be expected from national data. The ultimate test of the acceptability of NRT for these women will be the degree to which NRT is utilised.

The distinction between a cigarillo and a cigarette has important legal and financial implications. Since the wrapper of a cigarillo contains tobacco, cigarillos are taxed at the same rate as small cigars. In 2002, the US federal tax rate for small cigars was 4 cents per pack of 20, while the rate for cigarettes was 39 cents per pack of 20. While all 50 states impose a tax on cigarettes, only 45 states impose a tax on cigarillos, which are lower than their cigarette tax. If Voodoo cigarillos are taxed at the rate of cigars, the lower federal and state taxes mean a higher profit margin for the merchant and/or lower prices for consumers.

In addition to tax differences, labelling the Voodoo product as a cigarillo has important consequences for their regulation. Several states have expanded their definition of tobacco products to include bidis, making sales to minors illegal. Illinois, Vermont, and West Virginia banned the sale of bidis completely. More recently, California passed a bill prohibiting the sale, distribution or importation of bids except by businesses that prohibit minors, such as bars and casinos. Also, federal legislation to halt the importation of bids into the USA was introduced in 2001 by being sold as a cigar product. Voodoo cigarillos would get around the ban on bids in some states. This new product emerges at a time when bidis sales are vulnerable to increased regulation at the state, and possibly the federal level, as well as higher cigarette excise taxes in 19 states in 2002. The Voodoo cigarillo may be a clever way for the tobacco industry to circumvent the regulations and restrictions imposed on bidis. Voodoo cigarillos should be reliably tested to determine if manufacturers and vendors are in compliance with federal and state laws.
Smoking in children’s picture books

The other day, one of the authors went to a public library with his 3 year old daughter to read some picture books to her. Various picture books, from classic to newly published, were available. Classic books are her favourite. First, she chose a book portraying adventures of a naughty monkey named Curious George (by HA Rey). He came to an industrialised country with a man in a yellow hat. My daughter pointed to a picture of the man holding a pipe between his lips. A smoking scene in a picture book for small children!

The next book she chose depicted an elephant named Babar (by Jean De Brunhoff) that fled from his country to Europe after his mother was killed by men. After coming back to his country with western technologies, he changed elephant society into Western-style society and became a king. Again, the King Babar was holding a pipe.

The third book was depicting a monster named Barbapapa living with François’ family (by Tison and Taylor). He had a mysterious ability to metamorphose into anything he desired. Unfortunately, in this attractive book, François’ father was always holding a pipe. Another supporting character was smoking a cigar. Smoking seems to be a symbol of manhood in these children’s picture books.

My daughter then opened books about Moominvalley (by Tove Jansson) and Tintin’s adventures (by Herge) in which some characters were smoking. Finally, I myself selected a book depicting Father Christmas (by Raymond Briggs). On Christmas Eve, Father Christmas delivered presents to children all over the world. After the labourious job, he took a rest smoking a cigar and a pipe.

Picture books reflect the norms or perceptions of our societies. These classic children’s books were first published in times when smoking was not widely acknowledged as harmful and a smoking male adult was one of the sex stereotypes. In addition, pipe smoking seems acceptable in such picture books compared with cigars or cigarettes which are seldom seen.

Caregivers frequently read picture books aloud to children at home, kindergartens, or daycare centres, which may have a considerable influence on preschool children. Young children receive strong messages from pictures. Seeing adult males smoking in picture books, they may take it as a desirable behaviour.

It would be unacceptable to remove smoking scenes from these classic books or eliminate the books themselves. What we can do is to become aware of the potential influence of these books and take a negative attitude to smoking when we read to children. Fortunately, the man in a yellow hat seems to have quit smoking in the new series of George’s adventures.

**Getting them while they’re young in China. Submitted by Professor TH Lam, Hong Kong.**
Smoke and mirrors
Cigarettes are a major cause of premature death. Cigarettes are addictive. Secondhand smoke can be annoying, but is really not enough of a health risk to justify banning smoking in indoor environments. Payments to states in the Master Settlement Agreement were unjustified since cigarettes are self-financing. States actually save money because smokers die young. Lawsuits against the tobacco industry are without merit, since smokers have long known about the health risks. Continuing efforts to warn the public about the health risks of smoking are unwar- ranted since public awareness of these risks is now universal. Filters and low tar technology have made cigarette smoking safer, but maybe can be annoying, is an issue that limits on indoor smoking are unjustified and for the economy because such restrictions cause smokers to consume fewer cigarettes, and, therefore, “losses accrue to society in terms of foregone taxes”. Viscusi’s sharp criticism of current public health campaigns to warn the public about the health risks of smoking defies common sense. According to Viscusi, since public awareness of the health risks of smoking are nearly universal, there is no need to keep repeating their messages. In fact he argues that such efforts are counterproductive because people are likely to form unrealistic risk perceptions about smoking. Such reasoning is illogical. By analogy, if one were to accept Viscusi’s premise that once the public recognises the health risks of smoking there is no need to reinforce health messages, then one would also have to accept the idea that there is no need to spend a dime advertising Marlboro cigarettes since the Marlboro Man is nearly universally recognised. Apparently, cigarette manufacturers don’t accept Viscusi’s logic and nor should the public. Viscusi recommends that the government refocus its efforts towards giving smokers information about the risks posed by different types of cigarettes in the hope that this would move smokers to use less toxic cigarettes.

Viscusi is correct in noting an important deficiency of the Master Settlement Agreement that has made it difficult for new tobacco companies to enter the market, thus dampening competition for the development of potentially safer tobacco products. However, his credibility on this subject is diminished by his acceptance of the view that declining cigarette consumption in the USA since the 1960s corresponds directly to increased efforts to inform the public of the dangers of tobacco use. Viscusi’s criticism of the current wave of edgy in your face counter-advertising campaigns ignores the evidence that these programmes are actually reducing cigarette consumption. Instead of continuing these effective public health campaigns, Viscusi recommends that the government refocus its efforts towards giving smokers information about the risks posed by different types of cigarettes in the hope that this would move smokers to use less toxic cigarettes.

In summary, Smoked-filled rooms reads more like a legal brief written by a team of tobacco industry lawyers instead of a thoughtful commentary on the legal, financial, and social consequences of smoking. As such this book is a must read for plaintiffs’ attorneys, but for the rest of us we should stick with “smoke-free rooms”.

K M Cummings

References

Disclosure
K Michael Cummings is not an unbiased observer of Dr Viscusi’s research and writings. He has served as a paid expert witness on behalf of plaintiffs counsel in several of the same cases in which Dr Viscusi also served as an expert for the cigarette industry. Dr Cummings is currently employed as a senior research scientist and is chairman of the Department of Health Behavior in the Division of Cancer Prevention and Population Sciences at the Roswell Park Cancer Institute in Buffalo, New York, USA. His salary support comes primarily from Roswell Park Cancer Institute and from research funding provided by the National Cancer Institute, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the American Legacy Foundation, and New York State Department of Health. Dr Cummings serves on the medical advisory board for the Flight Attendant Medical Research Institute (FAMRI) and has served on various scientific advisory boards and grant review committees for National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Cancer Society, Canadian National Cancer Institute, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and state and local health agencies for which he has received honoraria. Dr Cummings has also received honoraria and has accepted hospitality and on a few occasions, travel costs, from pharmaceutical companies making tobacco dependence treatment products.