China ratified the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (the WHO FCTC) in 2006 and thus has the obligation to increase the prices and taxes of cigarettes. In May 2009, China raised cigarette excise taxes, which was cited by a Chinese government official as a measure of FCTC implementation. Researchers noticed that cigarette retail prices in China did not change after the 2009 tax adjustment; however, their conclusion was based on observations but not survey data.

We used the International Tobacco Control Survey (the ITC survey) data to examine trends in cigarette prices in China after the 2009 tax adjustment. The ITC survey is a prospective survey of tobacco use. The first three waves of the ITC survey were conducted in six cities: Beijing, Shenyang, Shanghai, Changsha, Guangzhou and Yinchuan. In each city, 800 smokers and 200 non-smokers were surveyed.

Table 1 Prices of cigarettes in six cities in China from 2007 to 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Average self-reported cost of 18 top brands (Yuan/pack)</th>
<th>Real prices (in 2007 Yuan)</th>
<th>Average retail prices of 18 cigarette brands that were purchased in all the three retail store surveys (Yuan/pack)</th>
<th>Real prices (in 2007 Yuan)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>7.80</td>
<td>7.80</td>
<td>6.26</td>
<td>6.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>7.79</td>
<td>7.44</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>6.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>7.83</td>
<td>7.30</td>
<td>6.28</td>
<td>5.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) In total, we purchased 280 packs of cigarettes (28 brands×10 packs) in 2007, 928 packs in 2009 and 713 packs in 2010. (2) Numbers of smokers who completed each wave of the International Tobacco Control China surveys were: 4627 in wave 2 (2007), 4410 in wave 3 (2009) and 1190 in the phone survey (2010).

Theoretically, if an increase in the cigarette excise tax is not transferred to cigarette retail prices, then cigarette consumption will not decrease. Thus, the 2009 cigarette excise tax adjustment cannot be considered as a measure of FCTC implementation at this time. China is home to one-third of the world’s smokers. One of the major reasons for the high smoking prevalence in the nation is the low price of cigarettes. China needs to make further progress to increase tobacco prices, as the WHO FCTC has been in effect in China for more than 5 years.

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Patient consent Obtained.

Ethics approval Ethics approval was provided by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Waterloo and the Institutional Review Boards at the China National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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REFERENCES


Western Australian smokers strongly support regulations on the use of chemicals and additives in cigarettes

In Australia, almost any ingredient is permitted in tobacco products, which is a situation aptly described by Dr Nigel Gray as ‘regulatory anarchy’. When smokers are informed that ingredients such as cocoa, coffee, peppermint, sugars and other sweeteners are added to most manufactured cigarettes and not just ‘niche’ flavoured varieties, many express amusement and surprise, or become shocked and angered. Most smokers have little or no notion that these seemingly harmless ingredients can play a deadly role by maximising addiction, increasing the palatability of cigarettes, reducing the smell of...