Australian Hotels Association, representing licensed premises and some restaurants. Information from Healthy Buildings International, an organisation with strong ties to the tobacco industry, was much in evidence. When the ACT Government proposed its legislation, it did so in the belief that it was only a matter of time before other jurisdictions would adopt a legislative basis for smoke-free public places. Whether, when, and how this happens will depend on the success of the Australian public health community in presenting the issues in a way that is informative and persuasive to the media, the public, and elected representatives.

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Adolescent use of cigarette vending machines

To the Editor—Public health officials have focused attention on the nature and extent of youth access to tobacco products in the United States.1 Studies have clearly shown that minors can purchase cigarettes unfettered.2 While model legislation calls for comprehensive measures to thwart youth access to tobacco,3 many communities have initially focused on regulating cigarette vending machines.

Tobacco control advocates, as well as the tobacco industry and retailers, recognise that a small percentage of youth tobacco sales is through vending machines. However, vending machines should be cause for concern because of their ubiquitous nature. A highly publicised mail intercept survey commissioned by the National Automatic Merchandising Association (NAMA) found that teenagers (13–17 years old) generally used over-the-counter sources for purchasing cigarettes.4 While 82% of NAMA respondents stated that they no longer smoke, only 19% said they would return to smoking if they were given the opportunity. The NAMA survey showed that 12% of youths had purchased cigarettes from vending machines in the past week. The NAMA survey also showed that 8% of teens had purchased cigarettes from vending machines in the past week.

The concept of a smokeless tobacco product, however, did not die with the concept of "smokeless tobacco". Like Premier, Eclipse heats rather than burns tobacco, but is designed somewhat differently. The Tobacco Control Act in California, which went into effect on January 1, 2006, requires retailers to keep tobacco products out of reach of children and to display a warning label on all tobacco products. The act also prohibits the sale of tobacco products to minors and requires retailers to record the sale of tobacco products into a computerized sales system.

One week after the New York Times story on Eclipse, we undertook an informal mail intercept survey to determine consumer awareness of and interest in trying "smokeless tobacco". We were curious to see how smokers perceived this product, and were interested to see if non-smokers might be induced to try smoking Eclipse, a product that might be marketed to young people. We recruited by asking individuals at three shopping malls in Buffalo to participate in a 5 minute interview on cigarette smoking. Overall, interviews were completed with a total of 94 persons, including 26 smokers, 28 former smokers, and 40 individuals who had never smoked. While two individuals who were approached to be interviewed refused participation in the study, we knew that we were not sure to what extent persons would know about the Eclipse cigarette. We found that 85% of smokers stated that they would be interested in trying the product. Respondents who expressed interest in trying Eclipse were more likely to report that they had tried the product. We also found that those who were aware of Eclipse were more likely to report that they had tried the product. This suggests that Eclipse may be an effective tool for reducing smoking prevalence, but further research is needed to confirm these findings.

Reference


Son of Premier

To the Editor—In 1988, the RJ Reynolds Tobacco Company (RJ) introduced a unique cigarette product called Premier. This product was unique because, unlike conventional cigarettes, Premier heated rather than burned tobacco, thereby significantly reducing the amount of smoke produced. In October 1988, RJ began testing marketing Premier in two American cities (Phoenix, Arizona, and St Louis, Missouri). However, it did not sell well in these cities and was removed from the market in February 1989.

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