

For this reason there appears to be a huge potential market for a product like *Eclipse*.

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See pages 261 and 280. – ED

- 1 Marwick C, Goldsmith M. Smokeless cigarette draws plenty of heat. *JAMA* 1989; 261: 13–4.
- 2 Hilts P. Little smoke, little tar, but still lots of nicotine. *New York Times*, 27 November 1994: A1, A38.
- 3 Pauly JL, Streck RJ, Cummings KM. US patents shed light on *Eclipse* and future cigarettes. *Tobacco Control* 1995; 4: 261–5.
- 4 US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Cigarette smoking among adults – United States, 1993. *MMWR* 1994; 43: 925–30.

Global dimensions of tobacco policy research

To the Editor – A recent editorial in *Tobacco Control*¹ drew attention to the need for tobacco policy research to be accelerated. Unfortunately, with the exception of a brief mention of the initiative by Canada's International Development Research Centre, the article focused on the United States. Three critical aspects were omitted: information on tobacco policy research in other industrialised countries with substantial experience (such as Finland, Australia, and New Zealand), the implications of the effects that tobacco control policy in developed nations has on increasing exports to developing countries, and the complex problems of adapting policy developed in advanced industrialised countries to the reality of the developing world.

Experience in many developing countries shows that comprehensive measures to control tobacco developed in advanced industrialised countries need to be considerably adapted if they are to be successful. For example, making tax increases the cornerstone of reducing affordability for cigarettes is problematic in countries with low gross domestic product per capita and thereby low cigarette consumption levels. The probability of smuggling is far greater, particularly because the ability to enforce all legislation is weaker. Placing warnings on advertisements or packs is thwarted by high levels of illiteracy, multiple languages, and the powerful effects of the tobacco industry in being able to target sports, cultural, and art events for sponsorship. Intentions to reduce sales to children through bans are hampered by the reality that a significant proportion of sales in developing countries occur through informal

street-side hawkers where control is problematic and often threatens the livelihood of poor hawkers. School education programmes are problematic in countries with high drop-out rates, no chalk, and poorly educated teachers. Support for smokers to quit at primary health clinics throughout the developing world is weak where the emphasis remains on child survival strategies.

All this suggests that policy initiatives developed in the advanced industrialised countries need to be radically reviewed in terms of their timing, appropriateness, and the possible use of other important policy initiatives. For example, the role of the media, the role of political leadership, and the need to integrate tobacco control into broad aspects of health development on the one hand, and economic development on the other, need to be given far greater attention.

Finally, a focus on the global dimensions of tobacco policy research should emphasise the need for international solidarity. In much the same way as smallpox control was realised to be impossible without global control, success in tobacco control depends upon international cooperation.

The editorial mentions that the journal, "with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, is poised to assume an expanded role in the dissemination of policy research findings."¹ A good starting point would be for *Tobacco Control* to follow up its editorial by addressing the issue globally as suggested, and for countries, foundations, and donors – for example, those in the USA – to allocate a proportion of their funds to reducing the international spread of tobacco. This would be coherent with the World Health Organisation's emerging twin themes of solidarity and equity in public health.

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- 1 Davis, RM. Tobacco policy research comes of age. *Tobacco Control*, 1995; 4: 6–9.

In reply – Thank you for your thoughtful letter. I agree with all the points you have made.

My editorial was not meant to be a comprehensive review of tobacco policy research worldwide. It focused on the United States because of the intensity of activity in tobacco policy research in the US in recent years. This activity includes publication of hundreds of studies on tobacco policy, development of a national agenda for tobacco

policy research,¹ and the allocation of more than \$10 million to fund such research.²

I agree that funding agencies in the USA and other industrialised nations should make available funding for globally relevant research. As I mentioned in my editorial,² Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) will direct its funding to research in developing countries. Moreover, IDRC convened a meeting in Bellagio, Italy, in June 1995, attended by 22 international organisations and individuals, to explore strategies to increase attention to tobacco control among other funding agencies. The participants invited IDRC "to lead a round-table process of consulting with other agencies, countries and experts in the preparation of a broad-based funding strategy and global partnership that responds to tobacco as a major threat to equitable and sustainable development."³

At *Tobacco Control*, we will do our part by giving serious consideration to manuscripts describing policy research in countries outside the USA, especially developing countries. Previously we have published policy research from Australia,⁴ Canada,⁵ Finland,⁶ Hong Kong,⁷ Japan,⁸ and the United Kingdom,⁹ as well as a few articles reporting multicountry policy research.^{10,11} Nevertheless, a paucity of research from developing countries has been submitted to *Tobacco Control*, and we hope to receive a greater number of submissions from such countries in the future.

RONALD M DAVIS
Editor

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- 11 Vogel D, Kagan RA, Kessler T. Political culture and tobacco control: an international comparison. *Tobacco Control* 1993; 2: 317–26.