FOREWORD

As we enter the 21st century, tobacco researchers and tobacco control advocates, along with the Tobacco Related Disease Research Program (TRDRP), are coming to grips with the sobering reality that tobacco use, especially cigarette smoking, continues as a growing global epidemic. With 1.1 billion smokers worldwide, and the tobacco industry successfully recruiting new smokers every day, tobacco related disease will increase as the century progresses. The World Health Organization estimates that 80% of tobacco related deaths will take place in poorer nations, particularly countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This situation desperately cries out for not only increased tobacco control efforts, but also intensified research programs to develop innovative, effective treatments for nicotine dependence and tobacco-related disease as well as new approaches to reduce tobacco use. In this regard, TRDRP is hopeful that US state governments, including California, will take full advantage of the monies secured from the Master Settlement Agreement (MSA), to augment funds for tobacco research and control and not squander these resources on mainly non-tobacco related programs.

In contrast to the developing world, in the USA and other developed countries smoking rates have fallen for the past 35 years. The state of California has been a leader in this trend. The singular event that propelled California into world prominence in tobacco control was the voters’ passage of an initiative, Proposition 99, in 1988. Proposition 99 established state funding for comprehensive tobacco research and control activities by increasing the taxes on tobacco products. TRDRP is administered through the University of California Office of the President, and is guided by a scientific advisory committee representing California research institutions, voluntary health organisations, and community based tobacco control advocates. The California “model” has been touted at conferences around the world and held up as the standard to emulate, especially in the USA. Despite this international recognition, few other states and countries have implemented tax supported comprehensive tobacco research programs. The MSA has provided the opportunity for other states to develop state sponsored research programs and we are hopeful that this chance is not lost.

In the past 10 years, TRDRP has funded basic and applied research in biological and biomedical sciences, social and behavioural sciences, public health, epidemiology, and public policy. It has supported over 700 research grants at 60 California non-profit institutions with awards totalling over $240 000 000. These include research into environmental tobacco smoke, sudden infant death syndrome, ethnic and racial differences in smoking patterns, novel treatments for lung cancer, defining the detrimental cardiovascular impacts of smoking, the neurochemistry of nicotine addiction, and health effects of maternal smoking and fetal development. Additionally, it was engineering and epidemiological research funded by the program that helped lay the scientific foundation for the landmark legislation that outlawed smoking in California bars. Moreover, TRDRP has creatively developed funding strategies that strengthen the link between community based and school based tobacco control work with academic research. These community academic research awards and school academic research awards, respectively, will improve the collaboration among the many and varied tobacco research and control activities in the state.

California finds itself in a unique position to identify and understand new smoking and tobacco use norms from its burgeoning multiracial and multi-ethnic population. Peoples from all over the Pacific basin, especially Asian/Pacific Islanders and Latinos from Mexico, Central and South America, are emigrating to California, bringing with them their own particular tobacco use histories, customs, and beliefs. This presents California researchers and tobacco control advocates with the challenge and responsibility to understand better the aetiology of smoking related cancers, lung disease, nicotine addiction, tobacco uptake prevention, and tobacco use cessation among these populations. The findings derived from the research conducted among all of California’s distinctive populations can serve as vital lessons for the rest of the USA and for many countries around the world.

TRDRP is proud to sponsor this special supplemental edition of Tobacco Control. We hope that tobacco researchers and control advocates will find this issue informative and engaging, and that it will provide new motivation and inspiration to tackle the many challenges of tobacco research and control in the new century.

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