

Abstract: Barriers to effective tobacco control policy implementation in the US military

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This application is in response to PAR-12-010 "NIH Competitive Revision Applications for Research Relevant to the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act (R01)". This project is an extension of grant 5R01CA109153-07: *Barriers to Effective Tobacco Control Policy Implementation in the US Military*. The aims of the parent study are to: 1) explicate the barriers to effective tobacco control policy in the military; 2) describe the meanings of tobacco use in the military by conducting a set of secondary analyses of qualitative interview and focus group data obtained from military personnel, augmented by data from internal tobacco industry documents, military periodicals (e.g., Military Times magazines, military installation newspapers), and installation policy language; and 3) analyze effective tobacco control in the military by identifying key elements associated with successful implementation of a tobacco control policy at the installation level through in-depth case studies of effective policy intervention.

**Nature of the revision.** The current proposal will directly expand the scope of the parent grant to add focused work on military personnel's "perceptions and behaviors related to tobacco products, claims, and communications regarding tobacco products". Our previous work identified **commander attitudes** and **military retail product pricing** as primary factors impacting military consumer perceptions and behaviors about tobacco products. In this revision we propose to: 1) directly explore perceptions about the harm of various types of tobacco product use on the health and combat readiness of military personnel through interviews with military commanders; and 2) explore the effects of military tobacco product pricing policy by: (a) analyzing documents from the military retail system which operationalize pricing practices based on DoD Instruction 1330.9; and (b) interviewing military health policy leadership about tobacco pricing policy in their service.

**How the revision is a natural extension of the parent project.** The Aims of this application build directly from those of the parent project and add an important focus on the two primary factors identified in our previous research as influencing military consumer perceptions and behaviors related to tobacco products. In the parent project we are focusing on institutional barriers to developing more effective tobacco control policy in the military. In the course of our work, we discovered that military personnel consider tobacco products to be an acceptable part of the military culture and relatively safe compared to other risks they face. When asked what undergirds these perceptions, commander attitudes about tobacco and heavily discounted tobacco products are consistently mentioned by personnel, regardless of Service branch or military rank. In the parent grant we proposed to content analyze commanders' written messages about health (including tobacco) in installation newspapers. The purpose of this part of the parent project was to compare how military leadership communicates to their troops about tobacco compared to other health issues. With the addition of a recently retired, high ranking Naval officer to our research team and because of the visibility of the parent project in the military (publications from this project have been widely circulated among military leadership), we now propose to significantly extend the parent study and conduct interviews directly with military commanders across the four service branches. This innovative addition to the parent project will provide the first formative research based on interviews with military line commanders about what shapes their perceptions and behaviors toward tobacco products and their knowledge about tobacco's impact on the military's mission. The data obtained from these interviews is critical for efforts to develop a future

generation of military commanders who will help protect our nation's military personnel from the harms of tobacco products rather than supporting a culture that reinforces their use. The project also will provide important information about how different types of tobacco products are perceived. The parent project proposed to conduct a national study of the price of tobacco products in military retail. Department of Defense (DoD) Instruction 1330.9 mandates that tobacco prices on military installations be within 5% of prices in the local community. Our research, recently published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (see Narrative), demonstrated that prices of cigarettes (Marlboro Reds) were actually discounted 25%, on average, than prices in the community, with savings as high as 73% at one Navy Exchange. This proposal will extend the parent grant to determine how and why DoD Instruction 1330.9 has failed to impact tobacco product pricing – a situation which significantly impacts how military personnel view tobacco products.

**How this extension will influence the specific aims, research design, and methods of the current grant.**

The work proposed in this application will enhance and extend, but not alter the specific aims, research design, or methods of the parent project. We plan to continue to study commander messages in military newspapers as an important part of collecting information on how tobacco is framed to troops relative to other military health issues. We also plan to continue to examine tobacco pricing in military retail in order to determine whether the visibility given to this issue by our work impacts practices across time. This project will greatly propel tobacco control research with an occupational group that has been a favorite target of the tobacco industry due to their influence on our nation's youth and their vulnerability to tobacco addiction.