

Abstract: UPENN TCORS: Tobacco Product Messaging in a Complex Communication Environment

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Public communication about tobacco products has been transformed by the digital marketing revolution and the rapid diffusion of emerging social media. As a result, tobacco product information and misinformation is readily accessible through a variety of sources: from mass media sources (e.g., newspapers, TV), to social media (e.g. Twitter) and user commentary on media, to the final communication vehicle, the cigarette package itself. Such misinformation can mislead the public to underestimate the dangers or overestimate the benefits of various tobacco products, and threatens to undermine FDA's regulatory efforts. The UPenn TCORS responds to these challenges with a thematic focus on tobacco-related messaging in a complex public communication environment. Specifically, our Center will: (a) characterize the public communication environment to understand how it affects what people know about tobacco products, what they believe about these products, and their use of these products, and (b) determine the most effective strategies for the FDA to convey information and correct misinformation about tobacco products and use. Addressing this problem at a macro level, Project 1 examines information and misinformation about tobacco products in traditional and emerging media and how exposure to this information alters beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and tobacco use. Project 2 examines the "staying power" of beliefs about tobacco products and tobacco use that are based on misinformation in electronic social media and evaluates corrective interventions. Both Projects 1 and 2 focus on youth and young adults, whose perceptions and behavior may be most affected by internet-based information. Project 3 provides a detailed analysis of the effects of a particular form of implicit misinformation on tobacco use behavior - the use of color packaging by the tobacco industry to mislead the public to underestimate product harm. Two novel cross-cutting research cores will serve these projects: a Media Data Acquisition and Content Analysis Core that will acquire, code, and manage tobacco product information available in emerging media sources, and a Tobacco FactCheck Core that will develop and deploy novel tools to evaluate this information for false and deceptive claims about tobacco products and disseminate corrective information. Our Developmental Pilot Program will enable us to respond to emerging scientific opportunities and support new collaborative research activities, and our Training Program will develop the next generation of tobacco control regulatory scientists with a focus on communication research. An Administrative Core coordinates all of these activities utilizing proven strategies for facilitating interdisciplinary coordination and communication in P50 Centers. **RELEVANCE** (See instructions): The UPENN Tobacco Center of Regulatory Science (TCORS) will generate novel data to guide the FDA's efforts to convey information about tobacco products and to correct misinformation disseminated through public communication sources. Our Center will also develop and deploy novel methodologies and tools for the acquisition and analysis of tobacco product information in public media for use by the FDA, other agencies, and the scientific community.