

Examining the Effects of Advertising, Packaging and Labeling on Perceptions, Use and Exposure of Combustible Tobacco Products

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Overall Center Abstract:

In 2014, the 50th Anniversary Report of the Surgeon General concluded that by far the greatest danger to public health is from cigarettes and other combustible products, including cigars. Indeed, on the tobacco risk continuum, combustible products (i.e., cigarettes, cigars) are substantially more dangerous to the user than non-combustible products (i.e., smokeless tobacco, e-cigarettes). Although use of these products is (or will likely be) influenced by many factors including taste and consumers' perceived satisfaction, product trial is undoubtedly conditional on consumers' awareness and perceptions about these products, factors that are influenced by how these products are *marketed, packaged, and labeled*, domains that fall under the FDA's regulatory authority.

As such, the overarching goal of our TCORS is to accumulate a comprehensive and rigorous body of knowledge on the effects of tobacco communication, including advertising, marketing, packaging and labeling on regulatory-relevant outcomes of risk perceptions, use, behavior and exposure for combustible tobacco products, given their disproportional burden on public health.

Together our projects will address research gaps on combustible tobacco products with respect to the impact of potentially misleading advertising claims, descriptors, labeling and packaging features, where there is limited and in some cases no empirical data currently available to inform relevant marketing and labeling regulations for these combusted products to protect public health.

Projects 2 and 4 will examine the influence of marketing exposure to advertisements for combustible tobacco products, including their images and claims that may suggest reduced/modified risk. Tobacco advertisements are an important marketing vehicle that allows companies to prominently and creatively feature brand imagery and benefit claims, including those that might suggest modified risk.

Projects 1 and 3 will examine the influence of marketing descriptors, coloring and warning labels of the tobacco pack. Tobacco packaging uniquely provides repeated opportunities to express brand image and implicitly convey brand attractiveness, quality and health appeals to consumers every time the product is used. Furthermore, as future regulation may move to restrict other marketing forms, the tobacco pack is likely to remain the "final communication vehicle" between the industry and consumers. All projects will be enhanced by highly multidisciplinary cores; the center is committed to conducting rigorous tobacco regulatory science.