

University of Hawaii Cancer Center
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Laboratory Studies of Tobacco Advertising and Labeling Effects on Adolescents
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Abstract:

This application addresses Question #9, "Consumer perceptions of tobacco products including the impact of labeling and marketing." Despite some restrictions on advertising, a large number of U.S. adolescents still initiate smoking every year. Tobacco marketing practices are known to be an influence on adolescent smoking but there is a limited understanding of the mechanisms through which they work. This application proposes two controlled laboratory studies conducted with multiethnic samples of younger adolescents (12- 15 years of age) in Hawaii. This randomized approach avoids potential confounds that occur in field studies and thus permits stronger conclusions about the impact of marketing elements. In this 2-year project, we will conduct two experimental studies, each with a sample of 200 participants. We will test predictions derived from a theoretical approach that has been supported in a current field study of adolescents (ROI CAI 53154). In Study 1, we will use existing tobacco advertising materials that are modified through editing to emphasize different elements of the ads. In a 3 (experimental stimuli) X 2 (gender) design, we will test the role of (a) colors and (b) models in producing positive attitudes toward smoking; these will be compared with (c) a control condition with an unmodified ad. Dependent variables include explicit measures of reactions to ads and expectancies about smoking and implicit measures of affective reactions, identification with smokers, and willingness to smoke. We hypothesize that colors and models will both be influential for producing positive reactions, so regulation of these elements could reduce the impact of tobacco marketing on adolescents. A second study with a 3 (stimuli) x 2 (gender) design will use existing cigarette packages, with characteristics graphically manipulated to yield (a) a condition in which colors are retained but the size of the health warning is increased and (b) a condition in which all color and branding information is removed, i.e., plain packaging. These will be compared with (c) a control condition using existing cigarette packaging. Dependent variables will be similar to Study 1 but will include ratings of the extent to which the package makes smoking seem attractive. We predict that plain packaging will reduce the attractiveness of smoking, so regulating the use of branding and health information could reduce the impact of cigarette packaging on adolescents. In both studies we will investigate whether girls are more susceptible to tobacco marketing than boys, and will compare the reactions of four different ethnic groups. Study findings can be used to regulate aspects of advertising and packaging and hence reduce the prevalence of smoking among adolescents.