

HEALTH POLICY

New Studies Trace the Impact Of Tobacco Advertising

A packed press conference held last week showcased two new studies guaranteed to get the tobacco industry's goat. One indicates that cigarette advertising incites adolescents to start smoking—rather than persuading adults who already smoke to switch brands as the industry claims. The second shows that the industry's marketing efforts at least double the risk that certain adolescents would start smoking. Both studies were described at the press briefing by behavioral epidemiologist John Pierce of the University of California, San Diego, who directed the research.

The studies come just as the Food and Drug Administration is spearheading a drive to reduce smoking among children by 50% in the next 7 years. Among the agency's proposed strategies: restrict tobacco advertising. So not surprisingly, the tobacco industry came out swinging. "For people who are truly scientifically orientated, Pierce's study should

be an affront to objectivity," says Thomas Lauria, spokesperson for the Tobacco Institute, the industry's lobbying group. "We'll be taking a much closer look at the study because of [Pierce's] blatant advocacy [of smoking restrictions]."

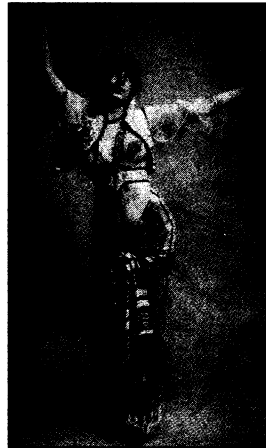
But Pierce told the press conference that his methodology will withstand efforts to discredit the studies. *Science* decided to put his claim to the test by sending the studies to a handful of experts to critique. The verdict was mixed. Some said that the studies—which are notoriously hard to do—failed to distinguish cause and effect. But most were supportive: The first report is "strongly suggestive" that advertising causes teenagers to

smoke, "but not conclusive," says epidemiologist Malcolm Maclure of the Harvard School of Public Health. Nevertheless, he adds, it's "certainly enough to justify action."

The first Pierce study, due to be published in the November issue of *Health Psychology*, found that since the 1880s each of four major advertising drives correlated with increases in smoking among 14-to-17-year-olds, but only of the sex targeted by the advertising. For example, increases in smoking rates among adolescent women—but not teenage boys—coincided with marketing campaigns for Chesterfield and Lucky Strike in the mid-1920s, which included the famous "Reach for a Lucky Instead of a Sweet" advertisement. The only other times the study found that smoking increased without a major promotion was during

the two world wars when soldiers were given free cigarettes.

That study focused solely on advertising. The second, published in the 18 October



Persuasive. Promotions like this increased smoking in target groups.

Researchers Protest Attack on Tobacco Study

Public-health researchers are protesting what they view as an "unprecedented" case of meddling by Congress in a peer-reviewed research project. Twenty-nine health leaders and academics—including Patricia Buffler, dean of public health at the University of California (UC), Berkeley—signed a newspaper ad last week blasting the House appropriations committee for trying to cancel a National Cancer Institute (NCI)-funded study of pro-tobacco lobbying. The ad attacks by name Representative John Porter (R-IL)—prime mover in the House's vote to boost biomedical research this year and chair of the key appropriations subcommittee—because he inserted language into a report asking that the study be ended.

The study that drew Porter's ire is being conducted by Stanton Glantz, professor of medicine and expert on heart function at UC San Francisco. Glantz has become a thorn in the side of the tobacco industry. In 1994, he testified as an expert opposing industry witnesses in regulatory hearings on the risks of ambient cigarette smoke. This year, he created an Internet file at which anyone can view thousands of pages of memos from the Brown & Williamson Tobacco Company—internal documents that were dumped anonymously in Glantz's mailbox. (To view the file, see <http://www.library.ucsf.edu/tobacco/>.)

In 1993, Glantz won a 3-year, \$600,000 grant from NCI to "determine the extent and nature of tobacco industry influence on state tobacco policy-making," according to an abstract. Glantz and his research team have been collecting data on contributions to state legislators by tobacco companies and analyzing the impact on state efforts to control smoking.

Porter inserted language into a report on the National Insti-

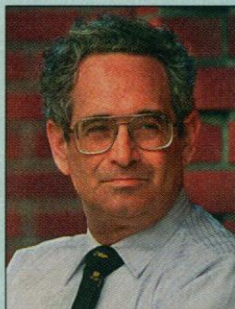
tutes of Health (NIH) in August, saying that the appropriations committee was "disturbed to learn about" Glantz's study. Porter's press aide, David Kohn, says the congressman learned about it from a newspaper reporter, who appears to have learned of it from pro-smoking lobby organizations. The House report says that "such research projects do not properly fall within the boundaries of the NCI portfolio, especially when nearly three quarters of approved research projects go unfunded." The report calls for the grant to be stopped in this, its second year.

Instructions contained in congressional reports do not have the force of law but are usually obeyed, especially when they come from committee chairs, and particularly if both the Senate and House agree. In this case, the Senate has not endorsed the attack on Glantz's project, but could do so in the final NIH bill, which is still pending in Congress.

Last week's newspaper ad said Porter's move would let "tobacco companies pollute and limit scientific inquiry." But Kohn says Porter regards such criticism as "irresponsible" and "absurd." Kohn points out that Porter—"an 18-year champion of biomedical research"—has voted in the past against tobacco subsidies. He wants NCI to drop this study because it doesn't qualify as genuine clinical or behavioral research, Kohn says.

Kohn adds that Porter would be delighted if NIH could find a way to pay for the study from "other sources," such as a discretionary account controlled by NIH Director Harold Varmus. Indeed, Porter met on 14 September with Varmus and NCI chief Richard Klausner, in an attempt to end the furor amicably. At the moment, neither NIH nor NCI is saying what will happen to the hot project.

—Eliot Marshall



Congressional target. Stanton Glantz of UCSF.

M. CONSTANTINI/SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER