

## **Graphic Canadian Cigarette Warning Labels and Adverse Outcomes: Evidence from Canadian Smokers**

### **Why this paper is important:**

The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control calls for large, clear health warnings that cover between 30% and 50% of the cigarette package. It is optional as to whether these warnings are pictures. A team from the University of Waterloo, Canada took a look at some of the most common arguments against introducing comprehensive, picture-based warning labels. The findings provide an excellent case in favour of graphic picture warnings as part of a comprehensive tobacco control program.

### **What the researchers wanted to know:**

The researchers wanted to find out if the four most common reasons people use to campaign against graphic warning labels were true. These reasons are:

- The warnings will cause emotional distress
- The message will be undermined by the picture
- Smokers will avoid the warnings
- The 'grotesque' labels will bring on a negative reaction and increase consumption

**What they did:** They conducted a telephone survey of 616 adult smokers to evaluate the Canadian graphic warning labels that have been on packages since December 2000.

**What they found:** They discovered that the pictorial warnings DO elicit strong emotional reactions but that these negative reactions actually make the warnings more effective. In fact, smokers who reported the most fear (44%) and disgust (58%) were also more likely to quit, make an attempt to quit, or reduce their smoking after three months.

Thirty percent of respondents did report trying to avoid the warnings but those who did were still as likely to read and think about the warnings and were also as likely to engage in cessation behaviour after three months.

**What it means to you:** The tobacco industry usually tries to delay or block more effective warnings. These results are helpful for you to convince policy makers in your country that graphic warning labels are effective and dispel some of the myths surrounding them.

### **Helpful links:**

#### **Tobacco Pack Information – World Bank**

<http://wbln0018.worldbank.org/HDNet/hddocs.nsf/c840b59b6982d2498525670c004def60/00206bce52d1530685256df600554530?OpenDocument>

#### **Canadian Graphic Health Warning Labels**

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hecs-sesc/tobacco/legislation/warnings/warnings.html>

#### **Thailand's Graphic Health Warning Labels**

[http://www.thpinhf.org/packaging\\_labeling.htm](http://www.thpinhf.org/packaging_labeling.htm)

Find out more: Contact David Hammond at [hammond@globalink.org](mailto:hammond@globalink.org)

From the article: Hammond, D et al. "Graphic Canadian Cigarette Warning Labels and Adverse Outcomes: Evidence from Canadian Smokers." *American Journal of Public Health*. Aug 2004; 94, 8, pg. 1442