

## Editorial

## Tobacco Use Is a Global Problem

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Worldwide there are almost 1 billion male and 250 million female smokers. Tobacco has major adverse consequences. Despite of its devastating consequences, tobacco is often viewed as a lower priority health threat in global countries.<sup>1</sup> Tobacco consumption is a major cause of illness and death. When primary breadwinners die or are too ill to work due to smoking-related diseases, entire families can be thrown into poverty. In addition, smoking prevalence tends to be highest among those with the lowest levels of education and income. If family income which is already inadequate, is diverted from meeting basic needs, including food, to purchasing tobacco, then it can have a devastating impact upon children.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, poor children in developing countries are frequently employed in tobacco farming to provide essential family income. These children commonly suffer exploitation through long hours and very low wages, denial of educational opportunities and exposure to toxic pesticides. Although tobacco growing is not the only form of agricultural production with harmful exposures, pesticides used in tobacco farming, including aldicarb, chlorpyrifos, and 1,3-dichloropropene, are especially toxic and can lead to chronic health problems especially when used without protective equipment.<sup>3,4</sup> The Global Youth Tobacco Survey is a school-based survey conducted in 137 countries and results indicate that almost half of the children who had never smoked were exposed to second-hand smoke both at home (46.8%) and outside the home (47.8%).<sup>5</sup>

Every day an estimated 82,000 to 99,000 young people start smoking.<sup>1</sup> Globally, the tobacco industry recognizes that new smokers must be recruited to replace those who quit or die from tobacco-related diseases.<sup>6,7</sup> Current projections indicate that the number of smokers globally will increase to 1.6 billion over the next 25 years. 1 Cigarette marketing and promotion are endemic throughout the world.<sup>2</sup> There is strong evidence that tobacco industry imagery and advertising cause tobacco use and dependence.<sup>7</sup> Depiction of smoking in movies has been a particularly pernicious influence.<sup>8</sup>

Global tobacco use, exposure and production are major public health crisis and threaten progress towards the United Nations Millennium Development Goals of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and achieving universal primary education. Besides, its also a moral crisis when governments and other stakeholders idly stand

by. Recognizing tobacco as a major problem is one key step towards focusing efforts to extinguish this global public health disaster. We are dedicated to advocating for increased resources and priority for tobacco control and we call upon others to join us in this effort. ■

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