

Experts: Big Tobacco dead by 2047, possibly sooner

June 25 2009

President Barack Obama's signature on a bill this week to grant the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulatory authority over tobacco was historic, and represents a step in the march to eliminate tobacco use in this country by 2047, two national tobacco experts said today (June 25).

The pair published "Stealing a March in the 21st Century: Accelerating Progress in the 100-Year War Against [Tobacco](#) Addiction in the United States" in the July issue of the [American Journal of Public Health](#).

Michael Fiore and Timothy Baker, director and associate director of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention (UW-CTRI), respectively, chart milestones in beating tobacco addiction and map a battle plan to eradicate tobacco use in the next few decades. The researchers analyzed data from the 1960s, when the first systemic tracking of smoking rates began, until the present.

"Numerous observers have claimed over time that tobacco use has plateaued and progress against its use has stalled," the authors write. "However, the remarkable decline in rates of tobacco use since the 1960s belies this claim and underscores the remarkable success of [tobacco control](#) efforts to date."

Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show adults smoking between 1965 and 2007 dropped by an average of one half of one percentage point per year, from 42 percent to the current rate of about 20 percent rate. While this rate of decline hasn't occurred each year, the overall decrease has been quite steady.

The two researchers urge a nationwide effort designed to accelerate the rate of decline over the next 50 years through:

- Substantial increases in federal and state tobacco excise taxes.
- A national clean-indoor air law.
- Elimination of nicotine from tobacco products.
- Funds for an aggressive mass media campaign to counter the tide of tobacco industry ads and sponsorships.
- A ban on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship.
- Evidence-based counseling and medication for every smoker who wants to quit.

Protecting young people, particularly those 17 and younger, from starting to smoke. Research shows that a major genetic risk for lifelong nicotine dependence can be suppressed if young people avoid daily smoking prior to age 17.

"The progress made in reducing tobacco use over the last 50 years should in no way temper our commitment to further reductions. Nor should that progress be interpreted to mean tobacco use is less toxic or that tobacco companies are now on the ropes. But, if appropriate steps are taken, a tobacco-free nation can be achieved within a few decades," Fiore says.

Past success has been born of:

- Tobacco tax increases.

- Enactment of clean-indoor air laws.
- Tobacco industry advertising restrictions.
- Tobacco product-labeling requirements.
- Policies that restrict youth access to tobacco products.
- Mass media campaigns.
- Increased availability and effectiveness of treatments to help current smokers quit.

In their article, Baker and Fiore called for FDA regulation of tobacco products to spur progress. That bill was signed into law on June 22, along with provisions that would further restrict tobacco industry targeting of kids, strengthen health warnings on tobacco packaging, require disclosure about what's in tobacco products and ban terms like "light" and "mild" to describe cigarettes.

Source: University of Wisconsin-Madison ([news](#) : [web](#))

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