

UCSF analyses detail tobacco industry influence on health policy

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Three new UCSF studies describe the wide reach of the tobacco industry and its influence on young people, military veterans and national health care reform.

The analyses will be published in a special July edition of the [American Journal of Public Health](#) titled "Modeling to Advance Tobacco Control Policy."

Findings are available online at http://www.ajph.org/first_look.shtml and coincide with a global event designed to heighten awareness of tobacco use and its negative health effects: World No Tobacco Day on Monday, May 31. The event was created by the [World Health Organization](#) to encourage a 24-hour period of abstinence from all forms of tobacco consumption across the globe.

"Tobacco industry activity has influenced so many spheres of life in ways that most people would never imagine," said Ruth Malone, RN, PhD, co-author of each paper and a professor in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences, UCSF School of Nursing. "We are continuing to discover previously unknown ways in which the industry not only seeks to sell cigarettes, but to actively undermine public health measures."

Research for each study was based, in part, on the UCSF Legacy Tobacco Documents Library, which houses more than 50 million internal tobacco industry documents released publicly as a result of the

1998 settlement agreement with tobacco companies.

The papers and their areas of focus are:

The We Card program: Tobacco industry "youth smoking prevention" as industry self-preservation - The We Card program is the most ubiquitous tobacco industry "youth smoking prevention" program in the United States, and its retailer materials have been copied in other countries, according to the authors. They conclude that the We Card program was undertaken for two primary purposes: to improve the tobacco industry's image and to reduce regulation and the enforcement of existing laws. The authors suggest that policymakers should be cautious about accepting industry self regulation at face value, because it redounds to the industry's benefit and it is ineffective.

Willful misconduct: How the U.S. government prevented tobacco-disabled veterans from obtaining disability pensions - The authors analyzed the unsuccessful struggle to access disability pensions by veterans sickened by tobacco use they had begun during their service. The paper describes how the US government, tobacco industry, and veterans' organizations each took inconsistent positions to protect their interests. As an example, the authors cite Congress and Department of Veterans Affairs leadership who, concerned about costs, characterized veterans' smoking as "willful misconduct," thereby contradicting the government's position in a federal lawsuit that tobacco companies addicted smokers. The authors call on the US government to compensate veterans fairly and abolish military practices that encourage tobacco addiction.

Our reach is wide by any corporate standard: How the [tobacco industry](#) helped defeat the Clinton health plan, and why it matters now - This paper describes how the two largest US [tobacco](#) companies, Philip Morris USA and RJ Reynolds, and their trade association coordinated to

mobilize ideologically diverse constituencies to help defeat [health care reform](#) under President Clinton. Actions included getting smokers' rights groups to heckle legislators at town hall meetings, and other tactics recently seen in opposition to reforms under President Obama, according to the authors. In some cases, groups appeared to have worked against their own interest, perhaps without full knowledge of who was funding these organizational efforts, the authors state. As the current reform debate unfolds, the authors suggest that this case highlights the importance of funding transparency for interpreting the activities of think tanks, advocacy groups, and "grassroots" movements.

Provided by University of California - San Francisco

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