

US pharmacy giant CVS ends tobacco sales

September 3 2014

CVS, the leading US drug chain by sales, announced Wednesday that it had stopped selling tobacco products and was changing its name to reflect a greater focus on health.

CVS—which operates some 7,700 pharmacies—ended the sale of cigarettes, pipe tobacco and other products a month earlier than expected, cutting out a profit stream its competitors like Walgreens will continue to enjoy.

"The sale of tobacco in a retail pharmacy conflicts with the purpose of the [health care services](#) delivered there," said CVS chief medical officer Troyen Brennan.

"Even more important, there is evidence developing that indicates that removing [tobacco products](#) from retailers with pharmacies will lead to substantially lower rates of smoking with implications for reducing tobacco-related deaths."

At the same time, the company—with \$127 billion in revenues in 2013, including \$65 billion from prescriptions—announced a formal name change from CVS Caremark to CVS Health "to reflect its broader health care commitment."

"For our patients and customers, [health](#) is everything and CVS Health is changing the way [health care](#) is delivered to increase access, lower costs and improve quality," said company president and chief executive Larry Merlo.

CVS was cheered by the White House as "setting a powerful example that we hope others in the industry will follow."

First Lady Michelle Obama tweeted: "Congratulations and thank you, CVS Health. Creating a healthier future for our next generation is one good reason to live tobacco-free."

Democratic Senator Dick Durbin, who has long pushed for tougher regulations on tobacco, hailed the decision as one that could "help prevent kids from ever starting a deadly habit."

There was no immediate comment on tobacco sales from Walgreens, which leads CVS by the number of stores, with nearly 8,200, but lags in overall sales.

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