

# Protecting plain tobacco packaging against industry influence

August 22 2016

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Canada's public consultation on plain packaging for tobacco requires strict guidelines to protect against interference by the tobacco industry, and media must also be wary, according to a commentary in *CMAJ* (*Canadian Medical Association Journal*).

The Canadian government's public consultation on plain packaging of [tobacco products](#), as a public health measure, will close Aug. 31, 2016. In the past, the [tobacco industry](#) has tried to thwart plain packaging initiatives using threats of [legal action](#) and by influencing public opinion through biased research—for example, in Australia in 2011, when its government introduced this type of packaging. Troubling tactics are now being deployed in Canada, with individuals and organizations linked to the tobacco industry speaking against plain packaging in the media.

Plain packaging requires the removal of all branding (colours, imagery, corporate logos and trademarks) on tobacco products, so that all packaging is standardized. Manufacturers may only include the brand name in a mandated size, font and location on the package. According to the Australian government, which was the first to implement [plain packaging](#), this move has contributed to a decrease in smoking.

The authors of the commentary call for vigilance by several sectors.

"The Canadian media should remember their important role in challenging industry-affiliated sources regarding their conflicts of interest, and should guard against simply becoming vehicles for industry

misinformation," write Drs. Julia Smith and Kelley Lee, Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia. "The [Canadian] government must require any individual or organization making a submission to the federal consultation to declare potential conflicts of interests, including funding sources, and must require that any claims made in submissions be substantiated by peer-reviewed evidence, with transparent methodologies, non-industry-linked data sources and clear funding declarations."

**More information:** *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, [www.cmaj.ca/lookup/doi/10.1503/cmaj.160791](http://www.cmaj.ca/lookup/doi/10.1503/cmaj.160791)

Provided by Canadian Medical Association Journal

Citation: Protecting plain tobacco packaging against industry influence (2016, August 22) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-08-plain-tobacco-packaging-industry.html>

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