

Researchers: Remove profit motive from tobacco to deal with mass addiction

December 17 2019



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Governments worldwide need to create non-profit supply systems for tobacco and nicotine products because of their potential to cause significant and avoidable harm, researchers from the University of

Otago say.

In an article in the international journal *Tobacco Control*, the researchers argue that [tobacco](#) and nicotine products should not be treated as normal consumer products, because of their addictive and hazardous nature.

Lead author Associate Professor George Thomson from the University of Otago, Wellington, says that while nicotine products, such as those used in vaping, are less harmful than tobacco, both are addictive.

"All tobacco and nicotine products need to have the profit motive removed from throughout their supply chain as soon as possible.

"We encourage [policy makers](#) to commit to reframing tobacco and nicotine products, so these are no longer seen as normal goods legitimately sold for profit."

He notes there is conflict between [government](#) health promotion strategies which aim to minimize the use of tobacco products, and the obligations of corporations to maximize shareholder profits.

"Governments should take responsibility for regulating [commercial activities](#) that have resulted in mass addiction and harmed [public health](#)."

Associate Professor Thomson says the options for governments range from less interventionist moves such as requiring non-profit retail dispensaries for the products, to a wholesale takeover of the ownership of all aspects of tobacco and nicotine production and the supply chain, from the field to the user.

In the short term, he says, governments should aim to reduce the convenience, appeal and availability of tobacco products. This could include a reduction in the number of tobacco outlets to less than five

percent of current levels and the requirement that [retail outlets](#) are staffed by people trained and motivated to help tobacco and nicotine users quit.

The researchers also advocate that governments use the tax revenue from tobacco sales to introduce programs to reduce tobacco and nicotine use.

"Regulations should support people addicted to nicotine to transition to a state where they are no longer dependent on any nicotine products."

One of the other authors, Professor Janet Hoek, who is co-director of ASPIRE 2025, a University of Otago Research Centre, and a Professor of Public Health, says effective marketing regulations are needed for all tobacco and nicotine products.

"These regulations should aim to reduce tobacco supply and should ultimately minimize the supply of all [nicotine](#) products. Removing profit motives from the supply chain would facilitate this transition."

More information: George W Thomson et al. The long-term supply of tobacco and nicotine: some goals, principles and policy implications, *Tobacco Control* (2019). [DOI: 10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2019-055132](https://doi.org/10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2019-055132)

Provided by University of Otago

Citation: Researchers: Remove profit motive from tobacco to deal with mass addiction (2019, December 17) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-12-profit-tobacco-mass-addiction.html>

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