

'Lost pleasure' from smoking not a cost in economic analyses

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(HealthDay)—"Lost pleasure" represented by consumer surplus should not be considered in economic impact analyses of tobacco regulation, according to an ideas and opinions piece published online Oct. 14 in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Frank J. Chaloupka, Ph.D., from the University of Illinois in Chicago, and colleagues examined the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's economic analysis of the graphic warning label regulation on [tobacco products](#). They focused on the costs of consumers, which included the loss of "consumer surplus," or pleasure that [smokers](#) derive from smoking.

Given that graphic labels influence quitting, the authors suggest that consumers' decisions to start or continue smoking are not fully informed, perfectly rational, and forward looking, and consequently the consumer surplus model is a poor description of the smoking decision. Most people begin smoking in adolescence or young adulthood, when they are not fully aware of the economic and health consequences of smoking, their mortality, and addiction. Furthermore, established smokers continue smoking to satisfy their desire for immediate gratification and later regret the decision. Most smokers report wanting to quit; many smokers do not find smoking pleasurable and derive limited consumer surplus.

"Data strongly suggest that many smokers derive little consumer surplus from smoking," the authors write. "To protect the public's health, it is imperative that the FDA incorporate this reality into all future evaluations of the costs and benefits of proposed tobacco product regulations."

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