

APPG on Smoking & Health Political Bulletin

“Plain Packs”: Not Plain, Just Honest

Over the last few months, the tobacco industry has stepped up its increasingly frantic efforts to resist the introduction of standardised packaging for cigarettes and other tobacco products.

Japan Tobacco International, one of the world’s big four tobacco firms, has taken out full page advertisements in national newspapers and magazines, claiming that the introduction of standardised packaging will lead to an increase in illicit trade. JTI has said it will spend £2 million on this campaign.

The big four manufacturers, including JTI, already use covert markings on their tobacco products. They also claim to have developed a unique numbering system for packaging to meet the terms of the recently negotiated Illicit Trade Protocol and help customs officers, retailers and others to tell whether tobacco products are tax paid and being sold in the correct market.

The JTI adverts also used a wildly misleading picture of what they claimed would be a future standardised pack of cigarettes. As this Bulletin shows, such packs would actually carry clear and strong health messages, and prevent the industry from using the design of their packs to market their lethal products to a new generation of consumers.

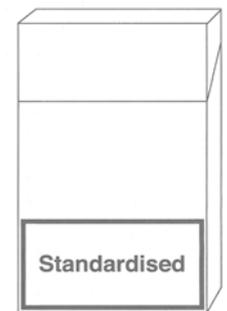
Also in this Bulletin, we show how the industry is using packaging to undermine existing health warnings.

Please Note: The All Party Group will be holding hearings on illicit trade in December and January. We are also holding a breakfast briefing on the new NICE guidance on harm reduction. Details of both meetings are on page 4 of the Bulletin, Parliamentarians and researchers are very welcome.

**Stephen Williams MP, Chair,
APPG on Smoking & Health**



Plain pack: Australia style



Plain pack: JTI style

JTI, which owns the Silk Cut, Mayfair and Benson & Hedges brands in the UK, has recently placed newspaper ads using the above picture to claim plain packs would be easy to counterfeit and lead to increased smuggling.

This is a company which has been accused of aiding and abetting smuggling of its own cigarettes. Only in 2007 it had to pay \$400 million to the EU over such claims and yet is now again under investigation over new allegations that its distributors were smuggling cigarettes across more than a dozen countries to avoid tax.[1]

Next to the JTI pack is an example of a standardised pack, based on those to be sold in Australia from December. Standardised packs will include health warnings, have a standard shape, and security markings to show that the pack is genuine and being sold in the correct national market.

In a YouGov survey of 10,000 adults, when shown such packs 62% of the public supported their introduction, with only 12% against.

[1] European Parliamentary Committee and Japan Tobacco: a violation of article 5.3 of the FCTC? Andrew Rowell and Anna Gilmore, BMJ Group Blogs, 11 October 2012. <http://blogs.bmj.com/tc/2012/10/11/european-parliamentary-committee-japan-tobacco-a-violation-of-article-5-3-of-the-fctc/>

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How the Tobacco Industry Uses Packaging to Hook New Smokers



The picture above shows how the tobacco industry bends the existing rules about packaging to appeal to new consumers in their target markets and to try to discourage existing users from quitting.

On the outside, the pack of Benson and Hedges “Silver Slide” looks not unusual.

But unlike most packs, to open it you have to press the side opening where it says “Push and Slide”. That exposes a tray containing the cigarettes. Printed on the tray are the words:

“I owe my success to having listened respectfully to the very **Best** advice & then going away and doing **tHe** exact opposite”.

G.K. Chesterton

This design is intended to reinforce a key tobacco industry marketing message that has been used with success for many years: smoking is cool, an act of rebellion, adult, and transgressive.

And yet the industry continues to deny that its pack designs are intended to attract new smokers.



This picture shows a pack design specifically created to appeal to young women.

Industry documents released under the US Master Settlement show that mentholated cigarettes have been used by the industry for decades for this purpose. For example, in 1981, an internal RJ Reynolds document stated that:

“Smoking is frequently used in situations when people are trying to make friends, to look more mature, to look more attractive, to look ‘cooler’, and to feel more comfortable around others. These aspects of social interaction are especially prevalent among younger adult smokers....” [1]

The tobacco industry tries to claim that standardised packaging would cost jobs and feed illicit trade. But the truth is that it will protect the next generation of consumers from starting to smoke. That’s the real reason why the industry is so desperate to stop it.

[1] “Marketing of menthol cigarettes and consumer perceptions: a review of tobacco industry documents” Stanley J Anderson, Tobacco Control 2011

FOI Request Shows Industry Campaigners Rigging Plain Packs Petition

Tobacco industry campaigners running a petition against plain packaging cheated to boost their results, as revealed in documents published after a Freedom of Information request to the Department of Health.

On the 14th June 2012, the Tobacco Programme Manager at the Department of Health wrote to the Director of the industry front group FOREST to tell him that he had personally observed a campaigner falsifying signatures to the anti-plain packs petition in the street. Rather foolishly, the campaigner filled out a page of signatures in his own writing while standing close to the DH office in Wellington House at Waterloo! [1]

One company involved in organising the petition on behalf of the tobacco industry was Tribe Marketing, whose website [2] says:

“Since 2001 we have placed high quality brand ambassadors across a variety of campaigns... from experiential teams at festivals to teams of hit squads in city centres and hospitality staff at the best events.

Our Brand Warriors are (as) passionate about what they do as are we, which is why our clients keep coming back to us year after year.”

“Brand ambassadors” are often glamorous young people employed to use personal contact at meetings, festivals and events to promote the image of commercial brands.

The website www.promojobspro.com gives details of young women who have worked for Tribe Marketing on the plain packs petition and helping the company promote products for tobacco firms including BAT. It also gives full details of their vital statistics.

[1] <http://transparency.dh.gov.uk/2012/09/13/foi-release-correspondence-about-the-governments-consultation-on-the-packaging-of-tobacco-products>

[2] <http://tribemarketing.co.uk/>



But Hands on Our Petition ...

Industry Claims on Plain Packaging Bogus: New Research

Two studies by a research group at the University of Otago, New Zealand, challenge the tobacco industry's claims about plain packaging.

The first study surveyed 418 smokers and 418 non-smokers in New Zealand and was carried out in March 2012. More than two-thirds of respondents supported plain packaging. Although the tobacco industry claims that packaging simply encourages brand switching, the survey found only 29% of smokers agreed that was the case, while 44% disagreed. [1]

The second study found tobacco packaging communicated very powerful brand identities to young adult smokers and non-smokers.

Smokers and non-smokers alike were able to identify clear “brand personalities” for both familiar and unfamiliar cigarette brands. The study included an American brand called Basic, with little in the way of brand imagery. Both smokers and non-smokers saw Basic as only 'budget' and 'plain'. [2]

[1] <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1753-6405.2012.00907.x/abstract>

[2] <http://www.biomedcentral.com/content/pdf/1471-2458-12-796.pdf>

Harm Reduction: Helping Smokers Quit at Their Own Speed

People smoke because they are addicted to nicotine, but they die from the smoke they inhale. Yet tobacco remains the primary source of nicotine. Access to a range of "clean" nicotine products, which could include patches, gum and e-cigarettes, would help reduce the harm to people who otherwise would have continued to smoke.

What is needed is a "light touch" regulatory system covering nicotine products that can be shown to be of positive benefit in reducing smoking. At present e-cigarettes are entering the market with no adequate regulatory system in place, while other products are strictly regulated as medicines.

The UK Government is leading the way in this important area of tobacco control policy. The Department of Health's Tobacco Control Plan, launched in March 2011, promised to "develop new approaches to encourage tobacco users who cannot quit to switch to safer sources of nicotine".

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence is developing public health guidance on harm-reduction approaches to smoking, to be published on Wednesday 24th October. Proposals on a new regulatory system will be published by the Medicine and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency in 2013.

The All Party Group on Smoking and Health is to hold a breakfast briefing meeting on harm reduction and the NICE guidelines on **Thursday 25th October, from 8.30am to 9.45am**. The venue is Room N, Portcullis House, Westminster, London SW1A 2LW.

All Parliamentarians and researchers would be very welcome. If you are able to attend, please email Debbie Millward at ASH: debbie.millward@ash.org.uk

Illicit Trade Protocol Adopted: APPG to Hold Hearings

This November, the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control meets in Seoul, Korea. It will adopt the new Protocol on Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products.

The Protocol represents a vital step forward in the fight against illicit trade. It will help strengthen the work already being done on the issue by the UK Government, by public services including the police and trading standards officers, and by the European Union Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF).

The UK's record on fighting illicit trade is already strong. HM Revenue and Customs estimate that the proportion of cigarettes sold in the country that are illicit has fallen from about one in five in 2000/01 to one in ten in 2009/10.

The Protocol's provisions include a requirement for an effective international tracking and tracing system for tobacco products, and strong obligations on the tobacco industry to keep full records, conduct due diligence with commercial partners and keep tight control of their supply chains.

The All Party Group on Smoking and Health is to hold an inquiry into illicit trade in the UK, with witnesses giving evidence **on 6th and 13th December 2012, and 10th January 2013**. The venue for the Inquiry will be the Jubilee Room, Westminster Hall. Light refreshments will be available from 8.30am, and the meetings will run from 9am until 11.30am.

All Parliamentarians and researchers are very welcome.

Officers of the group:

Chair: Stephen Williams MP

Treasurer: Ian Mearns MP

Secretary: Bob Blackman MP

Vice Chairs: Kevin Barron MP
Lord Patel
Lord Rennard MBE

Baroness Finlay
Baroness O'Cathain OBE
John Robertson MP

The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Smoking and Health is a cross-party group of Peers and MPs which was founded in 1976

"To monitor and discuss the health and social effects of smoking; to review potential changes in existing legislation to reduce levels of smoking; to assess the latest medical techniques to assist in smoking cessation; and to act as a resource for the group's members on all issues relating to smoking and public health."

ASH provides the secretariat for the APPG and funded the printing of this publication.
www.ash.org.uk/APPG E: appg@ash.org.uk T: 020 7739 5902