

“Current Tobacco Industry Strategies to Undermine Tobacco Control”

OTRU ROUNDS: March 5, 2010

Sponsored by the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit, Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion/L'Agence Ontarienne de Protection et de Promotion de Santé, CAN-ADAPTT & TEACH

Presenter: Dr. Stanton Glantz, Ph.D.,
Professor of Medicine (Cardiology),
American Legacy Foundation Distinguished Professor of Tobacco Control,
and Director of the Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education,
University of California, San Francisco (UCSF)

Date: Friday, March 5, 2010 at 8.30am-9.30am

Location: Delta Chelsea Hotel,
Mountbatten Ballroom 2nd Floor, 33 Gerrard Street West

This presentation focused on the industry's ongoing effort to reinvent itself as "responsibly regulated," particularly in the context of harm reduction. These "reduced harm" products need to be considered at a broad population and policy, not just at the individual level.

Main points from Dr. Glantz's talk included:

- Current rebranding/marketing of snus by tobacco industry focuses on snus as being discrete, socially acceptable, and having reduced harm, which undermines smoke free environments.
- While using snus is overall less harmful than smoking cigarettes, there is a need to look at the implications at a population level as well as individual level.
- Increasingly we are seeing dual packaging of cigarettes and snus together, undermining smoke-free policies.
- Lifestyle choice is industry rhetoric.

Key points regarding smokeless tobacco (ST):

- Overall, promotion of smokeless tobacco is unlikely to have population benefits.
- Cannot assume ST benefits the "average" smoker.
- Might actually result in increased harm (as non-smokers take up ST use).
- Assumptions required for promoting ST are unrealistic.

Innovative approaches likely to be more effective in harm reduction and in smoking cessation (SC):

- Smoke-free environments.
- Denormalization (of tobacco use and of the tobacco industry).
- Price increases.
- Quit lines.
- Engaging the medical profession to integrate SC more systematically in care (providing cessation services, asking about smoking status).