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Tobacco Industry Tactics that Undermine Public Health

The 2014 Surgeon General Report (SGR) describes nine types of tobacco industry tactics that undermine public health: intimidation, alliances, front groups, campaign funding, lobbying, legislative action, buying expertise, philanthropy, and advertising and public relations. The report cites the following examples:

- Engineering cigarettes to create and sustain addiction, e.g., adding chemicals that cause nicotine to reach the brain quicker and adding flavors like menthol that reduces the harshness of smoke, particularly for young people. (SGR pp. 782, 801)
- Casting doubt on the science about the dangers of smoking and of secondhand smoke. (SGR pp. 29, 32, 802)
- Denying research that says advertising increases smoking. (SGR p. 797)
- Engaging in marketing that obscures the dangers of smoking by implying that certain types of cigarettes are less harmful, and marketing new products that imply lower risks. (SGR p. 801)
- Aggressively marketing to children with campaigns like Joe Camel. (SGR p. 32)
- Resisting efforts by the military to reduce tobacco use by military personnel through artificially low prices, and providing free samples and coupons in violation of military policy. (SGR p. 778)
- Conducting cost-lowering promotions that disproportionally effect price-sensitive smokers, such as youth and young adults. (SGR p. 778, 797)
- Developing a commercial relationship with the movie industry to place tobacco products in films between the 1920s through the 1970s. In 2012, the Surgeon General found that there is a causal relationship between the depictions of smoking in the movies and initiation of smoking among young people. (SGR pp. 797-798)
- Challenging FDA efforts to protect consumers, such as suing to block graphic warning labels. (SGR p. 787)