

Message from the Series Editor

This volume is the 19th of the Tobacco Control Monograph series of the National Cancer Institute (NCI). This series began in 1991 with a visionary blueprint for public health action on tobacco prevention and control. In the years since, it has disseminated important cross-cutting research in areas such as the effectiveness of community-based and population-level interventions, the impact of tobacco control policies, the risks associated with smoking cigars and low-tar cigarettes, and systems approaches to tobacco control.

The subject matter of this monograph stands at the confluence of three major trends of the past century: the growth of mass media, the concomitant rise in cigarette smoking as a social phenomenon, and more recently, research to understand and to decrease the disease burden caused by tobacco use. Cigarettes are a product of the mass media era; the art and science of mass communications and mass marketing were critical to the growth of tobacco use in the past century. At the same time, however, the media have contributed significantly to the roughly 50% decline in smoking prevalence that took place over the past four decades, by increasing public knowledge of the health hazards of cigarette smoking, helping to change social norms about cigarette smoking, and increasing public acceptance of tobacco control policies.

This monograph summarizes what we have learned about the ability of the media to encourage and discourage tobacco use. There has been much interest in and study of media, and several government publications document the impact of advertising on tobacco use. This publication provides the most comprehensive and critical review and synthesis of the current evidence base in this area, drawing on work from many disciplines and research traditions. There is growing interest in applying what we have learned in tobacco prevention and control to other public health areas (such as dietary behavior). This monograph has important messages for public health researchers, practitioners, and policymakers as well as those in the communication science and media studies communities.

This monograph provides a comprehensive assessment of the literature on developing effective pro-health media messages and on policies to control tobacco marketing, both in the United States and abroad. This information is critical to support efforts to reduce the use of tobacco and the morbidity and mortality associated with its use. The evidence presented in this volume also underscores the need to continue to study and understand the ability of protobacco forces to change media strategies to adapt to a changing tobacco control policy environment.

We are pleased that Dr. Timothy Johnson, Medical Editor for ABC News, has provided the Foreword to this volume. As a physician who began working in television in 1972, he has a long-standing record of communicating the harmful effects of smoking to the public. His background and commitment provide invaluable perspectives about the power of the media and why this monograph is so important for tobacco prevention and control.

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Monograph Series Editor
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