

Message from the Series Editor

The evolution of the Tobacco Control Monograph Series underscores its growing importance as a resource for researchers, practitioners, and policy makers in tobacco control as well as in other areas of public health. Lessons learned from tobacco prevention and control can be applied to a variety of public health issues, including physical activity, diet and nutrition, overweight and obesity, and substance abuse. The National Cancer Institute (NCI) is committed to disseminating this cross-cutting knowledge to the widest possible audience so that others can benefit from the experience of the tobacco prevention and control community. By so doing, NCI is increasing the evidence base for effective public health interventions and improving the translation of research to practice and policy.

In 1991, NCI published the first monograph in a series designed to address cutting-edge issues and research on tobacco control. That monograph, *Strategies to Control Tobacco Use in the United States: A Blueprint for Public Health Action in the 1990's*, was visionary in its scope and focus: not only did it acknowledge that tobacco use was a complex problem that demanded new ways of thinking and acting, but it also encouraged expanded exploration of tobacco use issues by the tobacco control community. The three-axis model for the American Stop Smoking Intervention Study for Cancer Prevention (ASSIST), described in Monograph 1, was designed to address the complex interplay of varied target populations, critical channels for intervening (e.g., health care, schools, worksites, and community groups), and intervention types (e.g., mass media, program services, and policy). (See Monograph 16: *ASSIST: Shaping the Future of Tobacco Prevention and Control* and Monograph 17: *Evaluating ASSIST: A Blueprint for Understanding State-level Tobacco Control* for more details.)

Although it did not adopt the “systems” nomenclature, Monograph 1 laid the foundation for this monograph (Monograph 18), which provides a new and expanded vision of tobacco control as a complex adaptive system. This new model encourages the tobacco control community to (1) collect and use vast arrays of data more effectively; (2) develop and optimize networks to enable the community to more efficiently address varied populations, critical channels for intervention, and intervention types; and (3) support the analysis of complex systems so that more effective strategic decisions are made. Monograph 18 builds on the foundation laid by Monograph 1 by explicitly encouraging (1) the development of informatics infrastructures and collaborative networks, (2) analysis of complex interacting variables, and (3) adoption of new interventions that can speed research to practice (and practice to research). Monograph 18, as the conceptual heir to Monograph 1, provides a new framework for thinking about and acting on the complex relationships among causal factors of public health threats, and it challenges us to consider not just whether we can more effectively use our knowledge of informatics and information management, networks, and complex systems, but whether we will use those essential tools to more rapidly benefit the public’s health.

Stephen E. Marcus, Ph.D.
Monograph Series Editor
April 2007