



香 港 醫 學 會  
The Hong Kong Medical Association

FOUNDED IN 1920-INCORPORATED IN 1980 AS A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE  
MEMBER OF WORLD MEDICAL ASSOCIATION AND CONFEDERATION OF MEDICAL ASSOCIATIONS IN ASIA & OCEANIA

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17 May 2017

Dr. Hon KWOK Ka Ki  
Chairman of Subcommittee on Smoking (Public Health) (Notices) (Amendment) Order 2017  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Dr. Hon KWOK,

**The Hong Kong Medical Association supports**  
**the Smoking (Public Health) (Notices) (Amendment) Order 2017**

The Hong Kong Medical Association, as the largest doctors' association in Hong Kong, dedicates to safeguard the health of the people. As mentioned on our submission to the Panel on Health Services dated 18 June 2015 – LC Paper No. CB(2)1808/14-15(13), we would like to reiterate our stance that we support to enlarge the size of pictorial health warnings to cover at least 85% of the area of the surface on which it appears, increase the number of forms of health warning from six to twelve and to include the quit smoking hotline on the cigarette pack.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) Guidelines<sup>1</sup>, it is evident that plain packaging could reduce the attractiveness and appeal of tobacco products, especially among the young population. Studies also revealed that plain packaging could be a precursor to behavioral change. More empirical evidence were presented on the WHO guidelines as summarized below:

- a) Tobacco branding could mislead consumers that certain products are less harmful to health than regular brand variants.
- b) There is a strong association between packaging design and how consumers perceive risk.
- c) Plain packaging could limit the societal impacts of smoking from the marketing practices of the tobacco industry.

Among young people, the short-term health consequences of smoking include respiratory and non-respiratory effects, addiction to nicotine, and the associated risk of other drug use. Long-term health consequence of youth smoking is reinforced by the fact that most young people who smoke regularly continue to smoke throughout adulthood. A school-based survey on smoking among students commissioned by the Food and Health Bureau and conducted by the School of Public Health of The

<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization, Plain packaging of tobacco products: evidence, design and Implementation. 2016.  
<http://www.who.int/tobacco/publications/industry/plain-packaging-tobacco-products/en/>

University of Hong Kong during October 2014 to April 2015 conveyed that prevalence of current smoking among secondary school students were 2.7%, and those among primary school students were 0.2%.<sup>2</sup> The sobering findings and health consequences demonstrated the urgency of implementing plain packaging to deter youth and teenagers from taking up smoking.

The total economic loss from smoking-related diseases highlights the significant loss to the society, health sector and the country's economy. Smoking costs Hong Kong over \$5 Billion every year. The costs of diseases caused by tobacco is \$2.6 billion for healthcare and \$1.8 billion for productivity losses.<sup>3</sup> Along with lung and heart problems, smoking can cause eye disease, skin problems and many cancers including pancreatic and bladder cancer. Smoking imposes a substantial burden on the city's health care institutions, especially those funded by the public's tax dollars.

Some countries have already enacted legislations to regulate the packaging and labelling of tobacco products while litigations were made in some countries. In December 2012, Australia implemented fully plain tobacco packaging. France, Ireland and the UK passed laws that will see implementation of plain packaging in 2016, and Hungary and Norway are in the process of developing laws to implement plain packaging. Several other countries, including Singapore, New Zealand, South Africa and Turkey, have either expressed an intent to implement the measure or are in the policy-development process. It is vital for Hong Kong to follow the global trend of an impactful tobacco control measure as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. CHOI Kin  
President

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<sup>2</sup> School of Public Health, the University of Hong Kong. School-based Survey on Smoking among Students 2014/15. December 2015. <https://sph.hku.hk/yss/>

<sup>3</sup> School of Public Health, the University of Hong Kong. The Cost of Diseases caused by Tobacco in Hong Kong. February 2005. <http://ebook.lib.hku.hk/CADAL/B38630497.pdf>.