

Clerk to Panel on Health Services
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

17th May 2017

Dear Sir/Madam,

The United Christian Nethersole Community Health Service has the mission of promoting the health of the community. We strongly support the enactment of the amendment of the Smoking (Public Health) (Notices) Order (Cap. 371 sub. leg. B) of enlarging the pictorial health warning to 85% for ALL types of tobacco product packaging, and increasing the number of forms of health warning from six to twelve, and adding the quit line 1833 183. We support the proposal of adding new health warnings and more frequent rotation of health warnings to raise the deterring effect to smokers. The amendments line up with WHO's call for countries to adopt plain packaging or pictorial warnings covering more than 85% by 2018. We advocate for at least 85% health warning coverage, with view to plain paper packaging.

- According to a study done by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, plain packs were perceived as having less 'clutter' on them to detract from the health warning, and that the dullness and seriousness of the plain packs enhanced the recall of health warnings, the attention paid to them and their perceived seriousness and believability.
- According to the Thematic Household Survey Report No. 53 released by the Census and Statistics Department, the number of female daily smokers in Hong Kong increased from the record low 56,100 in 1990 to 96,800 in 2012. Amongst women the biggest concern is the impact of smoking on their reproductive ability and for them clear and concise pictorial warnings about women's health on the plain packaging would be a significant potential deterrent.
- WHO considers that the next victims of the tobacco epidemic will be women. In fact WHO expects that until 2025 the number of women smoking is expected to triple. Tobacco industry promotes cigarettes to women using seductive but false images of vitality, slimness, modernity, emancipation and sophistication. In reality, it causes disease and death. More and more "slim line women-only" brands are being introduced. These "feminised" cigarettes are long, extra-slim, low-tar, light-colored or menthol. In addition to the exterior health warnings, changing the interior of the pack would reduce false health beliefs about cigarettes, and reduce brand appeal especially among youth females attracted to aesthetics.

- We at UCN have a comprehensive smoking cessation program for ethnic minorities in Hong Kong. In our experience we have felt the ethnic minority community is not very well versed with the health hazards of smoking and see it as a gateway to freedom. And despite of the strong cultural stereo types for smoking women, the tobacco company can target females through packaging that communicates brand imagery and novelty while camouflaging health warnings. The clear and concise pictorial health warning will act as a medium to educate them while overcoming their language barrier.

Bearing these facts in mind we urge the Government to enact upon the amendment of the Smoking (Public Health) (Notices) Order.

Thank you for your attention. For any questions, do not hesitate to contact myself at 31569012


Yours faithfully

Bulbul Sharma

Representative of UCNCHS Jockey Club

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