



ASIAN MEDICAL STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION HONG KONG

Address: P.O. Box 6176, Central Post Office, Hong Kong

Patron: Dr. David Ho (Director & CEO, The Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Center)

Honorary Advisors: Prof. Francis Chan (Dean, CUHK), Prof. Gabriel Leung (Dean, HKU)

General Advisors: Dr. Philip S.L. Beh (Pathology Dept., HKU), Prof. Dennis Y.M. Lo (Dept. of Chemical Pathology, CUHK),

Prof. N.G. Patil (Surgery Dept., HKU), Dr. Gilberto K. K. Leung (Surgery Dept, HKU),

Prof. Siew C. Ng (Dept. of Medicine and Therapeutics, CUHK)

Statement by Asian Medical Students' Association Hong Kong
to
The Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
Panel on Health Services
Regarding Cigarette Health Warning Label

Honourable Chairman, Members of the Panel,

Asian Medical Students' Association Hong Kong (AMSAHK), officially founded in 2003, is a student-led organisation jointly run by medical students from the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the University of Hong Kong. As a founding member of AMSA International and an associate member of the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA) recognised by both the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations (UN), AMSAHK advocates the importance of public health, scientific research, global exchange and medical education among medical students as well as in the public. We envision a society with high awareness of public health and human rights supported by united, well-equipped doctors.

Representing AMSAHK as well as the medical students body in Hong Kong, I would like to proclaim our support for the proposal of improving the health warning label on cigarette packaging in terms of increasing the size and variety of pictorial warnings as well as adding an indication of tar and nicotine yield.

Pictorial warnings have been proven to be an effective and sustainable method in reducing the smoking rate in Australia (Hammond D. et al, 2006), Canada and the Netherlands (Hammond D. et al, 2003, as cited by Fong G. T. et al, 2009), along with other countries from the International Tobacco Control Project (Fong G. T. et al, 2009). It is not just an effective measure to better educate smokers about the health risks and to make them think more carefully before smoking, but is also associated with an increased motivation to quit smoking (Borland R. et al, 2009) (Li J. and Grigg M, 2009). References aside, speaking from the perspective of the younger generation, we realise many people in our age group underestimate the harm caused by smoking and with a more vivid and eye-catching warning demonstrated, a clearer message can be sent to the youth. Nonetheless, the irony is with all this supportive evidence substantiating the effectiveness of an amended health warning label on cigarette packaging, there are still arguments claiming this proposal is not an effective one. It is ideal to completely remove cigarettes from the market, but unfortunately, or fortunately to those who are pro-smoking, we can only make progress by small steps. Nonetheless, it is still worth being implemented even if the regulation could only save one life. Although we might not have personally experienced many real cases yet, as future medical practitioners, we are expected to develop a deep respect for any life in our medical humanities and bioethics education. Hence, it is by no doubt that we are supportive of this regulation that would potentially save thousands of lives.

Furthermore, it has caught our attention that arguments from pro-smoking parties revolve around the rights of smokers to pursue their personal interest at their own risk. The truth is, it is not just their own health that they are risking - it is the entire population's. WHO Constitution highlights that



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“Everyone has the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, which includes access to all medical services, sanitation, adequate food, decent housing, healthy working conditions, and a clean environment.” (International Health Conference, 2002) AMSAHK has been an active advocate of the human right to health since the foundation of the Standing Committee of Public Health in our association. We are against any form of activities that would put others' health at risk and divest others of their basic rights to health. Therefore, we cannot emphasise enough on how much we support this proposed regulation that could not only reduce smoking rate but the number of victims of secondhand and thirdhand smoke.

Yours faithfully,

Cynthia Sin Nga Lam

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President, Executive Committee 2016-2017

Local Public Health Officer, SCOPH, Executive Committee 2015-2016

Asian Medical Students' Association Hong Kong

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