

9 Jan 2017

Prof Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long, SBS, JP
Chairman
Panel on Health Services
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

Re: Support to enlarge the health warnings on packets and retail containers of tobacco products to 85%

Dear Prof Lee,

As respiratory specialists leading three professional societies with more than 1200 members in Hong Kong, we write to give our strong support to the government's proposal to enlarge health warnings on packets and retail containers of tobacco products to 85%.

Indeed, according to the Guidelines for implementation of Article 11 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), the effectiveness of health warnings is recognized to increase with size, and that "Parties should consider [...] more than 50% and "aim to **cover as much** of the principal display areas as possible."

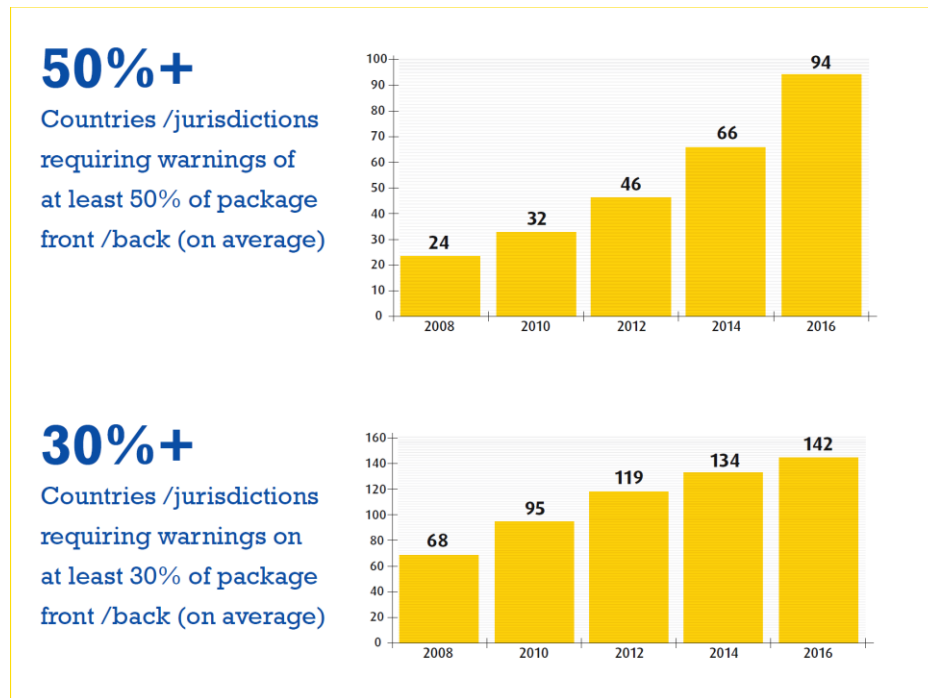
A larger size means that the warnings are more visible and impactful. A larger size allows for bigger and better pictures, a larger font size and /or additional information, including cessation information. Furthermore, a larger size reduces the chance of consumer distraction to promotional part of the package. If a-pack-a-day smoker would take his or her pack out 20 times per day, he or she would get the warnings 7300 times per year.

That larger sizes are more effective is confirmed by the considered decisions of governments worldwide, and we would like to supplement such trend with data from an international status report (5th edition) by the Canadian Cancer Society, newly released in October 2016.

- Among 205 countries/jurisdictions ranked, 94 countries/jurisdictions (46%) have

already required warnings to cover at least 50% of the package front and back (on average).

- Hong Kong has already attained such standard as early as 2007, but has since been status quo, while neighboring countries in SE Asia have surpassed us in tightening the regulations.



- List of top countries in terms of health warning size (average of front and back)

| | | |
|-----|-------|------------|
| 1st | 90% | Nepal |
| 1st | 90% | Vanuatu |
| 3rd | 85% | India |
| 3rd | 85% | Thailand |
| 5th | 82.5% | Australia |
| 6th | 80% | Sri Lanka |
| 6th | 80% | Uruguay |
| 8th | 75% | Brunei |
| 8th | 75% | Canada |
| 8th | 75% | Lao P.D.R. |
| 8th | 75% | Myanmar |

- Breakdown in South East Asian Region (SEARO)

| | |
|-----|--------------------------------------|
| 90% | Nepal |
| 85% | India |
| 85% | Thailand |
| 80% | Sri Lanka |
| 75% | Brunei |
| 75% | Lao P.D.R. |
| 75% | Myanmar |
| 55% | Cambodia |
| 55% | Malaysia |
| 50% | Bangladesh |
| 50% | HKSAR (status quo since 2007) |
| 50% | Macau SAR |
| 50% | Philippines |
| 50% | Singapore |
| 50% | South Korea |
| 40% | Indonesia |

Plain packaging should be the way forward. Its effectiveness has been supported by more than 80 peer-reviewed empirical studies, three systematic reviews and an official post-implementation review from Australia. However, before this can be implemented, we shall be in full support to enlarge the health warnings to 85% as an interim legislative measure, together with other multi-pronged approach including education, smoking cessation service and heavy taxation, in a hope to further bring down the smoking prevalence rate of 10.5% in 2015 to single-digit.

Smoking kills - 4674 patients were diagnosed lung cancer in Hong Kong in 2014, and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (A condition caused by smoking) was the second commonest cause of all hospital admissions! Thus, we strongly hope you can make our message loud and clear in LEGCO in this tobacco battle! Thank you very much.

Yours sincerely,



Dr TAM Cheuk Yin
Chairman
Hong Kong Lung Foundation



Dr Loletta SO KY
President
HK Thoracic Society



Dr David LAM CL
President
CHEST Delegation
HK& Macau

