

A review of undergraduate university tobacco control policy process in Canada.

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Final Report

The purpose of this research was to investigate what Canadian undergraduate universities are doing to control tobacco use on their campuses. We took as our starting point the 2004 Callard and Hammond report, *Tobacco on Campus: Tobacco Control Policies among Universities and Colleges in Canada*. We deepened their review of campus tobacco control policies by researching the genesis and evolution of such policies and also the ways in which they are enforced. We also extended their survey by inviting all eligible undergraduate university campuses across Canada to participate. Our research was conducted in two phases: the first comprised a telephone survey of administration tobacco control practices, and the second, focus group interviews of student experiences with tobacco control policies on campus. In addition, the understanding of campus tobacco control was augmented through a descriptive review of those Canadian undergraduate universities falling within study criteria.

Of the 86 universities we approached, 40 participated in the interview. Only 9 of those participating had read the Hammond and Callard report; a further 4 had heard of it.

Each participating campus reported that they have a tobacco control policy either in place or in development, and although these policies differed in complexity and scope, the objectives were similarly concerned with reducing and containing cigarette smoking by students, staff and faculty, and in creating a healthy campus environment. However, despite these objectives and the efforts made to achieve them, our analysis of participants' responses suggests that, with few exceptions, there are many problems in implementing tobacco control policy.

Our findings suggest that Canadian universities are limited in how they can implement tobacco control, and have several serious implications:

- Tobacco control information available to tobacco control policy/decision makers on campus does not appear to be reaching its intended audience. Tobacco remains the most widely-used lethal substance on campus, affecting both smokers and non-smokers. This fact appears to have become lost in the plethora of other health promotion information, and the tobacco industry is likely aware of this.
- Tobacco control, while still deemed necessary on campus, has lost much of its earlier momentum. The lack of funds, support and personnel reported in this research speak to a need to revisit the importance of providing students with this basic health requirement on campus.
- Further research is required into the enforcement of tobacco control on campus, whether this occurs under provincial, regional or campus jurisdiction. Having a written policy without consequence is insufficient to control tobacco on campus.
- Tobacco control policy that recognizes tobacco addiction needs to include adequate cessation support for students. For example, free nicotine replacement therapy and counseling, as well as educational programs.

The fact that every campus participating in this research reported that they had, or were in the process of developing a tobacco control policy is encouraging. However, there are several barriers to the delivery of these policies which do not appear to be adequately addressed. The tobacco industry is deliberately targeting the demographic that includes young students. Unless tobacco control on campus is sufficiently powerful to overcome these continual advances, then

students will remain vulnerable to conditions that permit them to start and continue to smoke on campus.

This research has been presented at the *5th National Conference on Tobacco or Health* (Edmonton, October 2007), and the *19th IUHPE World Conference* (Vancouver, July 2007), and accepted at *6th National Conference on Tobacco or Health* (Montreal, November, 2009). It has also been published: L.Baillie, D. Callaghan, M. Smith, J. Bottorff, J. Bassett-Smith, C. Budgen. M. Feddersen. A review of undergraduate university tobacco control policy process in Canada. *Health Education Research* (2009); doi:10.1093/her/cyp026.

In addition, a descriptive review of all Canadian undergraduate university policies was completed. The results of this review will be posted on the British Columbia Cancer Agency website (www.bccancer.bc.ca).

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