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ABSTRACT OF THE SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE



INFLUENCE OF MOVIE STARS ON THE INITIATION OF ADOLESCENT SMOKING

Adolescents watch an average of 3 movies per week. Alarming, cigarette smoking among actors in movies has increased in frequency over the past decade. The objective of this study was to determine whether adolescents, whose favorite movie stars smoked onscreen, were at increased risk of tobacco use. The baseline sample of this study included nonsmokers aged 12 to 15 years who were interviewed and who nominated their favorite stars. A review of popular films released during the study period was performed to determine whether stars smoked onscreen in at least 2 films. One third of nonsmokers nominated a star who smoked onscreen, which independently predicted later smoking risk. The effect was strong among girls. Among boys, there was no independent effect after control for receptivity to tobacco industry promotions. These results provide evidence that smoking by movie stars can play an important role in encouraging female adolescents to start smoking. The data suggests that levels of smoking in movies: (1) may undermine other public health tobacco control efforts; and (2) needs to be monitored carefully.

Comments: These findings indicate that smoking by stars in movies significantly increases the risk of future smoking among adolescent girls who have never smoked, independent of the effects arising from other tobacco advertising and promotional practices. Public health efforts to reduce adolescent smoking must confront smoking in films as a tobacco marketing strategy. **FSS**

Address correspondence to John P. Pierce, PhD, Cancer Prevention and Control Program, Cancer Center, University of California, San Diego, La Jolla, CA 92093-0645.

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