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Public Attitudes Toward Toxic Constituent Labelling on Cigarette Packages

-Qualitative Research Report-

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PN3964

April, 1996

Prepared for: Health Canada, Office of Tobacco Control
Prepared by: Environics Research Group

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1.0 Overview of Research

Environics Research Group was commissioned by the Office of Tobacco Control to conduct research into public reaction to toxic constituent labelling. This research study was undertaken in two phases; a qualitative phase involving a series of 18 focus group sessions, and a quantitative phase involving a national in-home survey.

This report summarizes the findings from the qualitative phase of the research. Results from the quantitative phase are available under separate cover.

A detailed description of the methodology used can be found in the next section.

The objectives of the qualitative research were as follows:

- to understand interest and attitudes among smokers, including teenagers who are smokers or may be receptive to smoking, toward information about toxic constituents in tobacco.
- To assess reaction among smokers to various methods of providing information on toxic constituents.
- To assess reaction among smokers to messages and formats to present information about toxic constituents.

2.0 Research Methodology

The research into public reaction to toxic constituent labelling on cigarette packages was conducted in two phases: a qualitative and a quantitative phase. This research report summarizes findings from the qualitative phase.

The qualitative phase of the research involved a series of 18 focus group sessions, conducted in six centres across Canada - Halifax, Montreal, Trois Rivières, Toronto, Saskatoon, and Vancouver. In each centre, one session was conducted with adult heavy smokers (age 20+, smoking 10 or more cigarettes per day, on average), one with adult light smokers (age 20+, smoking less than 10 cigarettes per day, on average), and one with potential teenage smokers - that is teens who either smoke or have not ruled out smoking as something they might do (see Appendix A for screening requirements). Of the six teen groups conducted, three were conducted with teens age 14 to 16 (Toronto, Trois Rivières, and Vancouver), and three were conducted with teens age 17 to 19 (Halifax, Montreal, and Saskatoon).

Within each session, equal numbers of males and females were recruited. Among the adult groups, efforts were made to ensure that there were participants from a wide variety of age groups. Sessions held in Montreal and Trois Rivières were conducted in French. Other sessions were conducted in English.

The schedule for the focus group sessions was as follows:

Toronto	February 21
Montreal	February 21
Saskatoon	February 23
Halifax	February 24
Trois Rivières	February 26
Vancouver	February 26

A copy of the discussion agenda used in the focus groups is appended to this report.

3.0 Summary of Research Findings

The following represents a summary of the findings from the focus groups:

- More than half of the focus group participants said that they were interested in and read labels on a wide variety of products. They were most likely to be looking for information on nutrition, chemicals and additives, and environmental-friendliness. Interest was higher among adults than teens, and higher among females than males. Few participants in any subgroup spontaneously reported having an interest in the labels on cigarette packages.
- Virtually all participants were aware that cigarette packages currently list the concentration of tar, nicotine and carbon monoxide. They were also very aware of the warning labels that appear on cigarette packages and had no difficulty recalling all of the phrases that do appear. The general feeling was that people are unaffected by these labels.
- Participants felt well informed of the health risks associated with smoking and in almost all cases accepted that smoking is an activity that could endanger their health. However, they justified taking this risk by either ignoring this information or by downplaying the severity of the risk.
- There was also widespread awareness and acceptance of reports that second-hand smoke can be dangerous to non-smokers. In many cases, people had altered or curtailed their smoking habits willingly out of concern for those around them or unwillingly as a result of restrictions placed on them through regulation.
- Although participants believed that there are real health risks associated with smoking, they tended to reject the idea that smoking has an impact on the environment. They believed that once cigarette smoke dissipates into the atmosphere, it has an insignificant effect of air quality. The only point most were willing to concede with regard to the environment is that some smokers may contribute to the litter problem by carelessly disposing of cigarette butts and packaging.
- Participants reported getting information about the effects of smoking from a variety of sources including: television and print commercials, schools, from non-smokers, and from the people around them (parents, children, friends, etc.). They believed that information about the health risks of smoking is abundant and that no smokers could possibly be unaware that smoking can be hazardous. The one area where they felt a lack of information is the area of addiction: there was a feeling that people who pick up the smoking habit for the first time do not fully appreciate how difficult it is to stop smoking after one has started.
- Beyond tar, nicotine, and carbon monoxide, few participants were aware of any other toxic constituents in cigarettes. When presented with a list of 15 toxins, most participants reacted with surprise. However, once they have absorbed the information, only a very few said it would affect their smoking habit.

- Participants initially criticized the list of toxic constituents presented to them because they felt it did not provide enough information. They wanted more information about what amounts of each chemical were truly dangerous, what the effects were, and how cigarettes compared to other products currently on the market.
- Despite the fact that most participants said they would be not be influenced in their smoking behaviour by a list of toxic constituents, most felt that the list provided valuable information and that people should be made aware of this information. For this reason, most supported the idea of listing these toxins on cigarette packages. They also tended to support ideas such as requiring vendors who sell cigarettes to post this list, or to have it posted in schools and other public places.
- As part of the research, participants were presented with a series of possible label designs. Generally, participants preferred to see the label in black and white and to have the ingredients listed in capital letters. There was no consensus about whether ingredients should be listed in milligrams or micrograms, how ingredients should be ordered (alphabetically, or by weight), or the use of a black on white or white on black design scheme.
- The idea of including a warning statement with the list of toxic constituents received wide support because it was seen to be useful in explaining the effects of these chemicals, many of which are unknown to participants. Generally, participants liked statements that gave specific information about what the chemical does, rather than what it could do; that were written in simple, easy-to-understand language; and that gave them new information.

February 25, 1996

**Draft Discussion Outline
Health Canada
Toxic Constituent Focus Groups
PN3964**

Introduction (10 minutes)

Introduction to Focus Group procedures
We want your opinion
Feel free to agree or disagree
You are being taped and observed
There will be a 10 minute break
You will be paid by the hostess at the end

Let's go around the table so that each of you can tell us your name and a little bit about yourself, such as where you work and if you have a family?

Attitudes to Package Labeling/Smoking Behaviour (15 minutes)

1 a→d ④ I want to begin the discussion by talking about package labeling and specifically ingredient lists on packages. Do you read package labels? Why or why not? What kind of package labels do you read? Do you read ingredient lists on food, beauty products (i.e. shampoo hairspray)?

2a→c ③ Are you looking for information about how healthy a product is? Whether it is good for the environment? Anything else?

3a→e ⑤ IF NOT MENTIONED ... What about the labels on cigarette packages? Do you ever read these labels? Without looking can you tell me what they say? What about ingredients? What ingredients are listed? IF NECESSARY TELL THEM THAT TAR, NICOTINE, AND CARBON MONOXIDE ARE LISTED.

4a→c ③ I want to talk more about ingredients but first, let's talk about smoking. How much do you smoke? When do you smoke? Why do you smoke?

5a→b ② What are your opinions on the health risks of smoking? What are you at greater risk of getting because you smoke?

6a→b ② What about the effects of smoking on non-smokers? Does this concern you?

7a→b ② What about the effect of smoking on the environment? Does this concern you?

8

What in cigarettes cause this?

9ab②

Where do you find out about the health risks associated with smoking? Are there other sources where you get information? 9a

10

To what extent is your smoking behaviour affected by information on smoking risks? information about contents of cigarettes? 9b

11a→c③

What about new smokers? What affects them? What affected you when you were starting to smoke? 11b 11c

12

Do you know about the chemicals (ingredients?) in cigarettes? On this piece of paper write down the names of the chemicals that you know or think are in cigarettes. (HAPPARTICIPANTS WRITE DOWN CHEMICALS THEY KNOW) 12a 12b

13

Would you like more information on the chemicals in cigarettes?

14

How would you like to receive this information?

Information on Toxic Constituents (15 minutes)

Here is a list of 15 chemicals that are in cigarettes.

15ab②

Are you surprised by this information? What affect does this information have on you? 15a 15b

16ab②

What information here is new to you? What do you think this information means? 16a 16b

17

Which of these chemicals, if any, have you heard of before?

18ab②

Do you know what affect any of these chemicals could have on you? Which ones strike you as being the most harmful? 18a 18b

19ab②

Is this useful information? Do you think other smokers should see this information? 19a 19b

20

What would be the best way to communicate this information?

21a→b③

What about on cigarette packages? Why is this or is this not a good idea? What about putting this information on the slide? 21a 21b 21c

22a→c③

Let's say these labels would go on a large package of cigarettes (the kind that slide out). How big should the label be? What if it took up the entire back of the package and the front was left for the tobacco company to put its brand name and logo? What if it took up half of the front of the package? 22a 22b 22c

APPROPRIATE PLACE TO TAKE A SHORT BREAK IF NECESSARY

Examples of Toxic Constituent Labels (45 minutes)

NOTE: You may want to mix up the order you show the exhibits

I now have some examples of how information about chemical constituents could be displayed.

LOOKING AT EXHIBIT A. What is your impression of this example? Do you like it, dislike it? What do you like what don't you like? Does this provide useful information? New information? Believable information? 23a 23b 23c

How would you make this exhibit better? 23a 23b 23c

Will it or could this information influence your behaviour? Will it or could it influence the behaviour of people choosing if they will start smoking? 24 25ab②

LOOKING AT EXHIBIT B. What is your impression of this example? Do you like it, dislike it? What do you like what don't you like? Is it effective? 26a 26b 26c

How is it different from Exhibit A? If necessary point out differences. 27ab②

Do you prefer the stripes on Exhibit A or the plain presentation of Exhibit B? 28

Do you prefer having everything in milligrams or do you like milligrams and micrograms displayed? 29

Do you prefer random order or alphabetical order of chemicals? 30

Do you prefer bold or un-bold type face? 31

How would you make this exhibit better? 32

LOOKING AT EXHIBIT C. What is your impression of this example? Do you like it, dislike it? What do you like what don't you like? Is it effective? 33a 33b 33c

How is it different from Exhibit A and Exhibit B? If necessary point out differences. 34

Do you prefer it with black letters or red letters? 35

How would you make this exhibit better? 36

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LOOKING AT EXHIBIT D. What is your impression of this example? Do you like it, dislike it? What do you like what don't you like? Is it effective?

How is it different from Exhibit A, B and C? If necessary point out differences.

Do you prefer having everything in micrograms, milligrams or do you like milligrams and micrograms mixed up?

Do you prefer random order of chemicals, alphabetical order or ranked by volume?

Do you prefer capital letters or lower case letters?

How would you make this exhibit better?

Based on all the examples we have discussed, which one do you prefer? If you could combine the best elements from each, what would you preferred label look like?

Summarize on a flip chart. Should the lettering be bold or not-bold? Should the lettering be black and white or coloured? Should the list have a box around it? Should the list have stripes or be plain? Should the lettering be in all capitals or in upper and lower case? Should the chemicals be in random order, in order of amount, or in alphabetical order? Should the amounts be listed in milligrams, micrograms or be mixed up? Should there be dot-leaders between chemicals and amounts?

Warning Statements (15 minutes)

In addition to a list of chemicals like the ones we just looked at, what do you think of the idea of having a warning statement about these chemicals at the bottom of the list? Do you like the idea? Do you dislike the idea? What do you like or dislike about the idea?

I have a series of these statements. **HAND OUT STATEMENT PAGE.** Please take a minute and read through these statements. Mark whether this is new information, whether you believe it, and whether it is useful. Also mark the five statements you prefer.

Now take a minute and complete the questionnaire about each of the statements. Put an X under each statement you agree with. Write any comments you have about each statement in the space provided beneath.

That concludes this focus group session.
Thank you very much for your participation!

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1960402
Suzanne FBB
February 25, 1996

Draft Discussion Outline
Health Canada
Toxic Constituent Focus Groups
PN3964

Introduction (10 minutes)

Introduction to Focus Group procedures
We want your opinion
Feel free to agree or disagree
You are being taped and observed
There will be a 10 minute break
You will be paid by the hostess at the end

Let's go around the table so that each of you can tell us your name and a little bit about yourself, such as where you work and if you have a family?

Attitudes to Package Labeling/Smoking Behaviour (15 minutes)

- 1a → d ④ I want to begin the discussion by talking about package labeling and specifically ingredient lists on packages. Do you read package labels? Why or why not? What kind of package labels do you read? Do you read ingredient lists on food, beauty products (i.e. shampoo hairspray)? 1d
- 1b → c ③ Are you looking for information about how healthy a product is? Whether it is good for the environment? Anything else? 2c
- 3a 3b 3c 3d
3a → ⑤ IF NOT MENTIONED ... What about the labels on cigarette packages? Do you ever read these labels? Without looking can you tell me what they say? What about ingredients? What ingredients are listed? IF NECESSARY TELL THEM THAT TAR, NICOTINE, AND CARBON MONOXIDE ARE LISTED.
- 4a → ③ I want to talk more about ingredients but first, let's talk about smoking. How much do you smoke? When do you smoke? Why do you smoke? 4a
- 5a 5b
5a → ② What are your opinions on the health risks of smoking? What are you at greater risk of getting because you smoke? 5b
- 6a 6b
6a → ② What about the effects of smoking on non-smokers? Does this concern you? 6b
- 7a 7b
7a → ② What about the effect of smoking on the environment? Does this concern you? 7b

8 What in cigarettes cause this?

9ab ② Where do you find out about the health risks associated with smoking? Are there other sources where you get information? 9a

10 To what extent is your smoking behaviour affected by information on smoking risk? 11a
information about contents of cigarettes?

11a → c ③ What about new smokers? What affects them? What affected you when you were starting to smoke? 11b 11c

12 Do you know about the chemicals (ingredients?) in cigarettes? On this piece of paper write down the names of the chemicals that you know or think are in cigarettes. (HAPPARTICIPANTS WRITE DOWN CHEMICALS THEY KNOW) 12a 12b

13 Would you like more information on the chemicals in cigarettes?

14 How would you like to receive this information?

Information on Toxic Constituents (15 minutes)

→ Here is a list of 15 chemicals that are in cigarettes.

15ab ② Are you surprised by this information? What affect does this information have on you? 15a 15b

16ab ② What information here is new to you? What do you think this information means? 16a 16b

17 Which of these chemicals, if any, have you heard of before?

18ab ② Do you know what affect any of these chemicals could have on you? Which ones strike you as being the most harmful? 18a 18b

19ab ② Is this useful information? Do you think other smokers should see this information? 19a 19b

20 What would be the best way to communicate this information?

21a → b ③ What about on cigarette packages? Why is this or is this not a good idea? What about putting this information on the slide? 21b 22b

22a → c ③ Let's say these labels would go on a large package of cigarettes (the kind that slide out). How big should the label be? What if it took up the entire back of the package and the front was left for the tobacco company to put its brand name and logo? What if it took up half of the front of the package? 22a 22b 22c

APPROPRIATE PLACE TO TAKE A SHORT BREAK IF NECESSARY

Examples of Toxic Constituent Labels (45 minutes)

NOTE: You may want to mix up the order you show the exhibits

I now have some examples of how information about chemical constituents could be displayed.

LOOKING AT EXHIBIT A. What is your impression of this example? Do you like it, dislike it? What do you like what don't you like? Does this provide useful information? New information? Believable information? 23a 23b 23c

How would you make this exhibit better? 23a 23b 23c

Will or could this information influence your behaviour? Will it or could it influence the behaviour of people choosing if they will start smoking? 24a 24b 24c

LOOKING AT EXHIBIT B. What is your impression of this example? Do you like it, dislike it? What do you like what don't you like? Is it effective? 25a 25b 25c

How is it different from Exhibit A? If necessary point out differences. 26a 26b 26c

Do you prefer the stripes on Exhibit A or the plain presentation of Exhibit B? 27a 27b 27c

Do you prefer having everything in milligrams or do you like milligrams and micrograms displayed? 28a 28b 28c

Do you prefer random order or alphabetical order of chemicals? 29a 29b 29c

Do you prefer bold or un-bold type face? 30a 30b 30c

How would you make this exhibit better? 31a 31b 31c

LOOKING AT EXHIBIT C. What is your impression of this example? Do you like it, dislike it? What do you like what don't you like? Is it effective? 32a 32b 32c

How is it different from Exhibit A and Exhibit B? If necessary point out differences. 33a 33b 33c

Do you prefer it with black letters or red letters? 34a 34b 34c

How would you make this exhibit better? 35a 35b 35c

