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Paper #3

Tobacco: The Biggest Killer of All

It is time to put an end to the sale of tobacco. If a new product were to be introduced that caused nearly half a million deaths each year in the U.S. alone, there would be a public outcry and that product would certainly be removed from the shelves of our nation’s stores. Let us see reality: tobacco kills. The American Cancer Society (ACS) estimates that more than 450,000 Americans will die this year as a result of tobacco, including many who do not even smoke ([“Cancer](http://www.cancer.org) Facts & Figures”). The ACS also reports that other effects include, but are not limited to, poor health, a sharp increase in health costs, and a cyclical effect that is causing our nation’s children to take up smoking at increasingly younger ages. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports that deaths as a result of tobacco are the most preventable forms of death in America today and that one in five deaths in America can be attributed to cigarettes (“Smoking and Tobacco Use”). It is time to end the madness. It is time to outlaw tobacco.

The effects of tobacco on our nation’s health are staggering. The ACS report on the effects of tobacco use is staggering, including the effects on the smokers themselves, as well as the effects of secondhand smoke on those unfortunate enough to be in close physical proximity to smokers. Some of these health effects include emphysema, sinus disease, obstructive lung disease, increased risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, and chronic bronchitis. According to the ACS,

But not all of the health problems related to smoking result in deaths. Smoking harms nearly every organ of the body, causing many diseases and reducing the health of smokers in general. In the year 2000, about 8.6 million people were suffering from at least one chronic disease due to current or former smoking, according to the CDC. Many of these people were suffering from more than one smoking-related condition. The diseases occurring most often were chronic bronchitis, emphysema, heart attacks, strokes, and cancer. (“Cancer Facts & Figures”)

These effects do not just take a toll on the smokers, but also those who breathe in secondhand smoke on a regular basis. The ACS estimates that 35,000 to 40,000 innocent people—nonsmokers who contract lung cancer due to secondhand smoke—will die this year due to the habit of others. This statistic does not include the effects that smoke will have on pregnant women, whose children will have to bear the effects of something over which they have no control. Whether the mother is a smoker or inhales the smoke secondhand, the results can be alarming. “Research has shown that women's smoking during pregnancy increases the risk of pregnancy complications, premature delivery, low-birth-weight infants, stillbirth, and sudden infant death syndrome” (“Smoking During Pregnancy”). These children will face a lifetime of physical ailments, some leading to death, all because of something that was beyond their control when they were still in their mother’s wombs. The number of deaths as a result of tobacco boggles the mind: more than one *billion* people have died as a result of tobacco use—more than all the wars in history combined (Kavanagh). Is it not the time to put a stop to all these senseless deaths? With each passing year in which nothing is done, millions of people will die.

The ill effects of tobacco use do not just include the detrimental health effects, but also the direct and indirect costs on the health care industry. The CDC reports that, “The annual cost of tobacco use is more than $50 billion in direct medical costs, for a total of $97 billion in health care and lost productivity (Smith). The soaring cost of health care as a result of tobacco use will also be passed on to non-smokers through rising health care premiums. In addition to these staggering costs, it is estimated in that same report that smokers will pay more than twice as much in life insurance as non-smokers and will die twelve years sooner; the report also states that, depending upon where one lives, the habit of smoking one pack per day could cost approximately $1,800 per year in health care costs alone. Now, multiply that by the number of smokers in America. What a waste of money that could be spent on something valuable—think of improving education, giving shelter to the homeless, providing better care for our military veterans—in this country.

One truly frightening aspect of the tobacco industry in America is the vicious cycle that turns our children into smokers. Whether it is peer pressure to fit in and/or a lack of education about the dangers of smoking, more and more minors are taking up the habit.

Particularly alarming is the fact that more than 3 million young people under age 18 smoke half a billion cigarettes each year and that more than one-half of them consider themselves dependent upon cigarettes. The decision to use tobacco is nearly always made in the teen years, and about one-half of young people usually continue to use tobacco products as adults. (Kavanagh)

According to this same report, the average smoker starts smoking in the eighth grade. It is estimated that more than 80% of smokers started smoking before they reached the age of eighteen; every day, more than 3,000 children will become regular smokers escents, that tobacco use is being passed on to our nation’s children, one only needs to know that tobacco companies are targeting children in their marketing, such as the use of Joe Camel, a cartoon figure used in the promotion of Camel cigarettes.

The recognition rates of The Disney Channel logo and Old Joe (the cartoon

character promoting Camel cigarettes) were highest in their respective

product categories. Recognition rates increased with age. Approximately

30% of 3-year-old children correctly matched Old Joe with a picture of a

cigarette compared with 91.3% of 6-year-old children. (“Brand Logo”)

Yes, there have been advertising restrictions put upon the tobacco industry in recent years, but this statistic alone shows how well those restrictions are working—or are not working, depending how one looks at it.. It is time to put an end to the tobacco industry, for this vicious cycle will only continue, hurting not only us, but also the future of our children, and their children.

Tobacco has few, if any, positive attributes. Sure, the tobacco companies employ thousands of workers and provides steady employment for some, but in the long run they are just factories of disease and death. Tobacco kills hundreds of thousands Americans each year, including those who do not even smoke. Among these casualties will be children and unborn children; they will be the ones who will pay the price, not only now, but in the future, when their children are dying. It is time to stop the madness. Tobacco kills.

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