Tobacco endgames in Australia

Coral Gartner and Wayne Hall

University of Queensland
SMOKING PREVALENCE IN AUSTRALIA 1945-2013

2.7M smokers aged 14+ in Australia in 2013

Daily + weekly smoking in 18+ year olds
WHAT POLICIES HAVE DRIVEN SMOKING DOWN?

- Tobacco taxation increases
- Advertising and promotion bans
- Retail display bans
- Graphic health warnings and plain packaging
- Restrictions on smoking
  - Public places and workplaces
- Quit mass media campaigns
STRATEGIES FOR GETTING PREVALENCE UNDER 10%...OR 5%

High tech approaches:
• Pharmacogenetics and vaccines for cessation
• Predictive genetics and vaccination for prevention

Low tech approaches:
• Tobacco harm reduction: SLT and ‘e-cigarettes’

No tech approaches:
• Intensification of current strategies
• Reducing tobacco availability
• De facto prohibition of smoked tobacco
HIGH TECH APPROACHES

• Identification of susceptibility genes for Nicotine dependence

• “Personalised medicine”:  
  • Preventive: “predictive genetics”  
  • Therapeutic: “pharmacogenetics”

• More effective cessation aids:  
  • Nicotine vaccines

• Preventive nicotine vaccination
BIG CLAIMS

• “….a vaccine that could help smokers conquer their nicotine addiction, making many smoking-related diseases and deaths relics of the 21st century.”*

• But long timeframes for development and little evidence of potential impact (cost? uptake? effectiveness?)

A LOW TECHNOLOGY OPTION: TOBACCO HARM REDUCTION

Substantially reduce harm in current smokers:
• who are unable or unwilling to quit
• by using non-smoked methods of nicotine delivery

Tobacco harm reduction products:
• NRT: Nicotine gum, patches, and inhalers
• “Smokeless” tobacco: snuff and chewing tobacco
• e-cigarettes?
SMOKELESS TOBACCO AND PHARMACEUTICAL NICOTINE

Most promising options:
- "Clean" pharmaceutical nicotine (PN)
- Low nitrosamine smokeless tobacco (LNSLT)

PN designed as short-term cessation aids
- Unattractive to smokers for long term use

Increased LNSLT use in Swedish men
- Declines in smoking and tobacco-related disease
- Some supporting evidence of potential impact from Sweden and Norway
SNUS: THE CASE FOR

Snus reduces harms for individual smokers
- eliminating respiratory risks:
  - COPD & lung CA
- residual risk of oral cancers much lower for Swedish snus than traditional SLT
- residual CVD risks of nicotine (+pregnancy)

If all (and only) smokers switched to snus:
- 90% reduction in tobacco-related disease
- huge economic savings to community
E-CIGARETTES AND HARM REDUCTION

Overtaken THR debate on non-smoked nicotine

Proliferation of e-cigarette products

- Enormous smoker interest because more like smoking
- Health effects: less harmful but by how much?
- Look like and used like cigarettes
- Effect on cigarette smoking

How should we respond?

- Pe-emptive bans (as in Australia)?
- Allow and strictly regulate sale and promotion?
Regulating cigarette content/design features
- Carcinogens, additives, and nicotine content
- Filter venting

Reducing tobacco availability
- Removing from convenience stores & supermarkets
- Sale only in specialty tobacco/nicotine stores
- Smoker licensing
SHOULD WE REGULATE AN EXPLICIT END TO CIGARETTE SALES?

Tobacco-free generation legislation

- Banning tobacco sales to anyone born after year 2000
- Private member’s bill in Tasmania

Legislate to phase out smoking over 10-15 years e.g.

- By progressively reducing nicotine in cigarettes
- Setting tradable caps on smoked tobacco?
Regulate all nicotine products according to their harmfulness by:

- Increasing taxes on smoked tobacco
- Reducing taxes on lower risk SLT, PN and ‘e-cigarette’ products
- Progressively restricting venues for cigarette sales, while allowing fewer restrictions on clean(er) products

Less harmful nicotine products could be used as a regulatory lever to phase out cigarettes
CONCLUSION

• No tech approaches are likely to contribute most to tobacco endgame in Australia

• Low tech approaches could have a role to play
Unfortunately, currently just a journalistic fantasy….

“Happy to say on the record that in my time as health minister banning cigarettes entirely was never considered by me or the Government.”

— Nicola Roxon, Minister for Health 2007-2011, 18th September, 2013