

Nicotine: Regulation

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Although tobacco use is a major public health problem, tobacco products are one of the few openly available commercial products that are virtually unregulated in some countries. They are also the only legally available products that kill up to half of its regular users when consumed as recommended by manufacturers of these products.

In recent times, regulation of products has been extended to cover newer products, such as e-cigarettes and through its networks, the WHO Study Group on Tobacco Product Regulation (TobReg) and the WHO Tobacco Laboratory Network (TobLabNet), WHO provides technical assistance to countries to regulate these and tobacco products.

KEY FEATURES OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR TOBACCO AND NICOTINE REGULATION

Regulatory Policies on Addiction, Appeal, and Cessation

- Seeking evidence and public comment on potential FDA regulation
- Increasing access to, and use of, medicinal nicotine products to help people quit
- Educating the public and correcting misperceptions about nicotine

Science-Based Review of Tobacco Products

- Extending certain compliance dates
- Seeking industry feedback on application processes
- Implementing product standards for safety

Youth Tobacco Prevention Plan

Several studies of the acute or extended effects of nicotine reduction in smokers with emotional disorders or serious mental illness have been recently completed or are underway. Studies to date indicate that when smokers with MHCs are switched, under randomized, double-blind conditions, to cigarettes with very low nicotine content, they reduce their cigarette intake, with minimal or no effects on withdrawal, psychiatric symptoms, or compensatory smoking. However, some deleterious effects of nicotine reduction on cognitive performance measures in smokers with schizophrenia have been observed, which are offset by providing concurrent nicotine replacement. We review these studies and provide suggestions for potentially increasing the effectiveness of a nicotine reduction strategy for reducing smoking in people with MHCs. The research described was conducted in the United States in 2010-2018.

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