

Majority in favour of radical restrictions

Swiss survey of tobacco use. Two out of three people support far-reaching restrictions on tobacco advertising and the sale of tobacco products to minors. The Swiss – smokers and non-smokers alike – believe that tobacco advertising plays down the risks associated with smoking, encourages young people to take up the habit and influences choice of brand. These were the conclusions of a survey of 2'500 people aged between 14 and 65 which was conducted on behalf of the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health (SFOPH) in spring 2003 by a team of researchers led by Professor Rainer Hornung of the University of Zurich.

The survey shows that two out of three people approve of radical restrictions on tobacco advertising and the proposal that the promotion of tobacco products be permitted only at the point of sale (kiosks, supermarkets). A large majority of the public also believe that tobacco advertising encourages young people to start smoking (64%), promotes cigarette consumption among smokers (61%) and plays down the risks associated with smoking (70%).

While the tobacco and the advertising industries claim that the sole aim of advertising is to influence consumers' choice of cigarette brand, 51% of the surveyed smokers believe that advertising influences the choice of brand.

Preventive effect of higher prices on first-time smokers

A majority of the public believe that increasing the price of cigarettes will reduce the numbers of young people smoking. 64% of 14 to 19 year olds are of this opinion. 61% of the population favour increasing the price of cigarettes by 90 centimes within one year. 73% of respondents who smoke every day are against price increases on this scale, while a majority of occasional smokers (59%) would support such an increase being made within a year.

More effective protection of the young

Though the Swiss support a ban on the sale of tobacco products to minors, they do not agree on the age limit, with some advocating 16 and others 18. If such a ban were to be introduced, a clear majority of the public believe that retailers should be fined if they infringe the ban. Finally, more than half the population (56%) favour a ban on the sale of tobacco products in automatic dispensers.

In summary, the survey shows that the majority of the Swiss population



favour radical restrictions on tobacco advertising, which they consider to have a strong bearing on the individual's decision to start smoking, particularly among the young. The connection between advertising and smoking has been demonstrated in several studies. Not only does advertising influence smokers in their choice of brand, it also promotes sales. According to the World Bank, radical restrictions on tobacco advertising would be enough to reduce tobacco consumption by 7%.

National Tobacco Prevention Programme

The National Tobacco Prevention Programme sets out Switzerland's strategy for the control of tobacco consumption and was approved by the Federal Council in 2001. It comprises twelve general goals which supplement and reinforce one another. The programme envisages strengthening the legal conditions governing tobacco use, particularly with regard to taxation, advertising restrictions, product labelling and accessibility.

Contact: Marta Kunz, Policy and Research Section, SFOPH, CH-3003 Berne, tel. +41 (0)31 322 95 05, marta.kunz@bag.admin.ch

Interview



Michel Graf: «There's an awfully long way to go» New substances and new ways of using drugs, combined with tighter budgets, are creating new challenges in the prevention field. Michel Graf, Director of the Swiss Institute for the Prevention of Alcohol and Other Drug Problems (SFA) since November 2003, explains why it's no longer possible to use rigid prevention messages. » Page 2

Passive smoking is harmful



Campaign against passive smoking Boundless tolerance or lack of moral courage? The new series of ads and TV spots for the «Smoking is harmful» National Tobacco Prevention Campaign say out loud what most people dare not: «It stinks!» Even though the bulk of the Swiss public feel bothered by second-hand smoke, over 70% of them dare not insist on their right to smoke-free air in restaurants, bars or clubs. » Page 4

Swiss Survey of Tobacco Use

The Swiss Survey of Tobacco Use («Tobacco Monitoring») commissioned by the SFOPH records trends relating to tobacco-consumption issues among 14–65 year olds in Switzerland on a representative and continuous basis.

Every quarter year since January 2001, a survey wave comprising 2'500 telephone interviews has been carried out, generating a total of 10'000 responses for evaluation. The Swiss Survey of Tobacco Use consists of a basic module plus several special modules. The basic module serves as a means of gathering key data on tobacco consumption four times a year. The special modules can be used to supplement the basic module with additional blocks of questions (e.g. the special module «Youth») during one or more survey waves.

Basic survey 2001 – 2002 32% of 14–65 year olds in Switzerland smoke. 52% of these would like to give up smoking, with 9% even

planning to do so the following month. 19% of the Swiss population have already had lasting success in giving up smoking.

Special module «Youth» Among young people, 30% of 14–20 year olds smoke, a high percentage that appears, however, to be stable. 17% of them smoke every day.

Special module «Passive smoking» A quarter of all non-smokers are exposed to second-hand smoke for at least an hour a day on average. About 8 out of every 10 respondents consider that at least half the places in restaurants, cafés and bars should be reserved for non-smokers.

Special module «Legislation» Two out of three people favour radical restrictions on tobacco advertising. A majority of the population believe that raising the price of cigarettes will reduce the numbers of young people smoking and that the sale of tobacco products to minors should be prohibited.

«We need to find new concepts, new perspectives and new messages in prevention»

Interview. Michel Graf, the new Director of the Swiss Institute for the Prevention of Alcohol and Other Drug Problems (SFA), talks about the new challenges, the budget cuts affecting prevention, and his view of the roles played by the Federal Government, the cantons and the specialist organizations.

spectra: Mr Graf, you took up the post of Director of the SFA on 1 November 2003. You've taken on this position at a time when consumption of legal and illegal drugs is on the increase, particularly among adolescents and young adults. What's going on? Have prevention efforts failed?

Michel Graf: I've been working in this field for over ten years now, and I think it would be wrong to talk about a general failure. It's true that politicians on the local, cantonal and, to a lesser extent, federal levels have failed to make available the finance needed for the children's and youth projects and the health promotion activities needed to stop this development. However, there has also been some success: if we hadn't done all the prevention and persuasion work at grass-roots level, we might not have succeeded in putting a brake on smoking among young people. The politicians have taken heed of some of our warnings: there would be no tobacco prevention fund and no tax on alcopops if the people working in prevention had not repeatedly pointed out that we would get nowhere without a legal framework to protect young people. The youth-protection measures relating to alcohol consumption, on which the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health, the Federal Alcohol Administration and we at the SFA collaborated, are another area where we can report an initial victory. At least all restaurants and shops have to exhibit a notice saying that alcohol may not be sold to young people. It's still too early to reap the fruits of these efforts. We need to take small steps forward – and there's an awfully long way to go.

Parliament drastically reduced the prevention budget allocated to the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health (SFOPH) from 2004. Will

Profile

Michel Graf was born on 27 November 1960. He originally trained in engineering drawing, but later qualified in sociocultural animation and adult education at the School of Social Sciences in Lausanne. He was recently awarded a public health diploma from Geneva University. Michel Graf is married, has two children and lives with his family in Lausanne. He has been involved in the field of substance dependence for 15 years, joining the Swiss Institute for the Prevention of Alcohol and Other Drug Problems (SFA) in 1992. After working as Deputy Director for five years, he was appointed Director on 1 November 2003. The SFA employs more than 40 people and has a budget of around CHF 9 million.



this mean that your efforts simply run out of steam and that what you've achieved will have been for nothing?

The budget cuts in alcohol prevention are now sending out a very poor signal. They could be interpreted as meaning that prevention has produced no results, or that there is no point in pursuing this work; in fact the truth is exactly the opposite. At any rate, the cantons and partners at grass-roots level certainly have the feeling that they're on their own now and will have to continue alone the projects that were started together. After all, a number of good projects have been launched: cantonal action plans as well as the national action plan for alcohol prevention have been drawn up and implemented. But what's going on at the moment at the political level is bad. I think it's really sad that the Federal Government has decided to allocate less funding to prevention precisely at the moment when new consumption patterns – binge drinking – and new products – for instance alcopops – are totally revolutionizing the alcohol scene.

Apart from alcohol, the SFA is also concerned with other drugs. What's happening with cannabis at the moment?

Cannabis is a major topic that perhaps has been made too much of. I am very disappointed that in the past two or three years the revision of the Federal law on Narcotic Drugs and psychotropic substances has not had the necessary political support in the form of explanatory and educational measures. This is an inexcusable failure to communicate draft legislation which had already reached a very advanced stage and which should have been accompanied with very careful flanking measures.

The absence of political debate on this topic has had a dramatic impact

and has caused great uncertainty among young people. They have drawn the very simple conclusion that cannabis is legal, that adults want to legalize it. As a result, something that only a minority of young people do is perceived as «normal». We need to tell young people clearly and repeatedly: most of them don't smoke cannabis!

That's the worrying situation we're facing today. We have to do something about it, and as soon as possible.

There has also been a failure to provide adequate information about the risks associated with the drug. This is exactly the opposite of what happened with Ecstasy in the late 1990s. There was absolutely no information available about the drug, and the media went completely over the top in emphasizing how dangerous the «death pills» were. This made it clear to us at the SFA that we needed to provide detailed information on specific drugs.

The SFA has played a really pioneering role where designer drugs are concerned ...

Yes, and it's a pioneering role that we're proud of. We saw how these drugs can spread when Ecstasy came onto the techno scene in 1995 and 1996. This was why we tried to carry out a study quickly to see what was going on. The findings were soon published in our first brochure called «Safer Dancing» which later, in collaboration with the SFOPH, became the well known «Just Mix Music». It was a big success in terms of communication because we were working directly in the relevant settings and others later became involved in this field. We were able to network effectively with event organizers, providers of outpatient services, prevention workers and the police, and we were also able to approach other topics such as noise, alcohol, smoking, etc.

However, enthusiasm waned after the Ecstasy wave. The market moved at a frightening speed, Ecstasy was rapidly followed by amphetamines, and users switched from one substance to another and back again. This meant that we had to develop more comprehensive strategies that did not revolve around one single drug.

What do you think of the pill testing carried out at techno parties?

It's great that we have the technology to test drugs like this, but is it a useful exercise? What message are we transmitting to users and non-users when we turn up at a techno party? We mustn't forget that this can also be misinterpreted as an open invitation to users to try whatever they like. It's vital that campaigns of this type are flanked by adequate dialogue. They also need to involve medical professionals; not everyone can carry out pill testing of this kind.

I'm glad that someone has taken the initiative and instituted such drug testing, even though many aspects still require clarification. There is still a long way to go before pill testing can be used completely without reservations. Prevention workers have to cooperate closely with other professionals – ranging from the police and emergency services to neurologists – who know exactly what chemical effects drugs have on the brain.

What challenges will prevention be facing in the coming years?

The challenge will be to deconstruct the prevention and public health models to accommodate all drugs. Their origin, settings and the ways they are consumed are not the same as they were in the hippie era. And that doesn't just apply to designer drugs; alcohol consumption is not the same today as it was 20 years ago. The types of alcoholic drink available today create new challenges; their image has changed over the past few years. We need to find new concepts, new perspectives and new messages. Despite all the epidemiological and statistical tools we have at our disposal, we are not able to say whether experience gained in 1995 will still be valid today or in a few years. We need a way of monitoring the reality of the situation on a permanent basis, a radar system that will tell us what's really going on. It's no longer possible to set prevention messages in stone and propagate them for the next hundred years, which is what we did with alcohol. The reality is changing all the time, and we need to adapt preventive measures on an ongoing basis too.

Nowadays information has a very limited useful life, so we need more resources. We should actually have more resources for statistics and epidemiology – at the very time when resources are being cut back.

Total revision of Tobacco Ordinance meets with largely positive response

Consultation report. The Swiss Federal Department of Home Affairs has published the consultation report on the Tobacco Ordinance. The response to the consultation draft has been largely positive. A particular bone of contention is the ban on the export of cigarettes that exceed the upper limits for nicotine, tar and carbon monoxide.



Warnings on cigarette packages are to be brought into line with European legislation. (The picture does not show the final design; the warnings adopted may use different wording).

The consultation exercise for the total revision of the Tobacco Ordinance met with a great deal of interest. More than 130 submissions were received from business, political and healthcare organizations. The Swiss Federal Office of Public Health has examined and summarized them in the consultation report that has just been released.

The consultation report presents the demands, suggestions and views submitted on the following issues:

- Additives in tobacco products, incl. the duty of notification
- Measurement and implementation procedures and methods
- Regulation of cigarettes destined for export
- Labelling of tobacco products
- Use of colour photographs
- Ban on terms that wrongfully imply a lower level of harmfulness

Generally speaking, the consultation draft of the Tobacco Ordinance

has been welcomed by the cantons, intercantonal bodies, federal commissions, the Social Democrat and the Green Parties and all healthcare organizations. The response of most organizations in the tobacco industry and trade was also largely positive. The Radical Party (FDP) has called for a thorough revision in accordance with its own submissions. The Swiss People's Party (SVP) and a number of business organizations have rejected the draft on the grounds that it goes too far on many issues.

While healthcare, youth and consumer organizations are eager to improve tobacco control and institutionalize more rigorous provisions in the revised ordinance, the tobacco industry and trade perceive the revision as a threat to their business interests. Cantons and municipalities in which the industry is an employer fear the economic consequences of downscaling or relocation by cigarette manufacturers.

Bones of contention

There is virtual unanimity on the upper limits set for the amounts of toxic substances that cigarettes sold in Switzerland may contain. The upper limits for exported cigarettes, however, have met with broad rejection by the industry. It argues that the restrictions threaten Switzerland's suitability as a location for the industry and would lead to loss of jobs and of huge tax revenues.

Also controversial is the issue of obligatory notification for toxic ingredients and additives: All the cantons and healthcare and consumer organizations expressing a view on this question have welcomed the duty of notification, considering it necessary as a means of informing smokers about the product. But the tobacco industry fears that the measure would put protection of its brand recipes at risk and therefore proposes a different format for the data to be submitted. The FDP, the SVP and the majority of industry federations seek to ensure protection of business secrets. They also consider that the health warnings the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control requires on cigarette packaging are sufficient. The draft of the revised Tobacco Ordinance prefers the larger warnings laid down by EU law.

The ban on the use of terms such as «light» or «mild» which deceptively imply a lower level of harmfulness of a tobacco product is another bone of contention. While the cantons and healthcare organizations are expressly in favour of the ban, business federations and the tobacco industry want to continue using the terms as a description of flavour and as part of the brand name.

Why does the Tobacco Ordinance have to be revised?

Tobacco consumption is one of Switzerland's most serious problems, causing some 8,300 deaths and 16,000 cases of disability every year. The Federal Council therefore approved the National Tobacco Prevention Programme in June 2001. The total revision of the Tobacco Ordinance seeks to ensure that tobacco products are labelled so as to provide consumers with detailed, factual and impartial information. The regulations regarding labelling and health warnings are to be tightened up and made more specific, and Swiss law is to be brought into line with EU legal provisions and international standards. The health warnings envisaged (see picture) are much larger than those specified in current regulations and are intended to make consumers more aware of the harm that smoking does.

Contact: Philippe Vallat, Head of the National Tobacco Prevention Programme, SFOPH, CH-3003 Berne, tel. +41 (0)31 322 95 05, philippe.vallat@bag.admin.ch

At first hand



Tobacco consumption is a serious health problem that is likely to get worse in the years to come. Take the following figures alone: The percentage of adolescents who smoke rose to 17% in 2003; three-quarters of all smokers were under 20 when they started, and 46% of them want to give it up.

Therefore all the more importance must be attached to prevention, which – despite cost-cutting programmes at all levels – is an investment in the health of future generations.

Each year tobacco consumption costs the Swiss economy five billion francs: 1.2 billion for medical care and 3.8 billion for the consequential costs of smoking. And it is impossible to put a price tag on the human suffering caused by tobacco-related illness and premature death.

On 21 March 2003 the Swiss Parliament took a crucial step when it created the legal framework for the Federal Council's decision of 2 July 2003 to set up a fund to finance efforts to prevent tobacco abuse. A charge of 2.6 centimes levied on every packet of cigarettes will yield tens of millions of francs which can be used selectively to finance prevention measures. The fund will operate under the supervision of the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health (SFOPH) and in close cooperation with the Federal Office for Sports (FOSPO).

It is the express wish of Parliament and all the other parties involved that the resources thus generated be made available as soon as possible for prevention purposes. The fund will benefit primarily the partner organizations involved in prevention work, and projects related specifically to sport. Physical activity in general and sport in particular are of great importance to public health and help reduce healthcare costs.

In effect since 1 January 2004, the Federal Council's Ordinance relating to the tobacco prevention fund makes it quite clear that the money is to be used for effective and sustainable prevention measures that satisfy high quality standards. The SFOPH and FOSPO have jointly set up an agency to administer the fund, which will make it possible to finance a whole raft of measures that

- discourage people from smoking or starting to smoke,
- help people who want to give up smoking to do so, and
- protect people against passive smoking.

Efforts will also focus on sensitizing the public, networking between tobacco prevention organizations, creating general conditions conducive to prevention, and promoting research.

It is important that all players active in tobacco prevention work towards the same goals.

Thomas Zeltner
Director
Swiss Federal Office of Public Health

Credits

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Christoph Hoigné

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Head of Editorial Board:
Markus Allemann
markus.allemann@bag.admin.ch

Contributors:
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Bundesamt für Gesundheit
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Tel. +41 31 323 87 79
Fax +41 31 322 24 54
www.bag.admin.ch
kampagnen@bag.admin.ch

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«It stinks!» Fed up with passive smoking

«Smoking is harmful.» The message of the National Tobacco Prevention Campaign's new series of ads and TV spots is short and to the point: «It stinks!» A call that few people dare to utter aloud, even though the bulk of the Swiss public feel bothered – indeed very much so – by second-hand smoke.

Although the great majority of people in Switzerland do not smoke, they are exposed to the risks associated with smoking. Non-smokers experience cigarette smoke as a major nuisance, particularly in restaurants, bars and cafés. Indeed, a quarter of all 14–65 year olds often choose to avoid smoke-filled restaurants. (This is a finding of the Swiss survey of tobacco consumption, «Tobacco Monitoring», in the October 2002 survey of passive smoking conducted by the University of Zurich. See also the article on p. 1). Anyone who is unwilling to let clouds of tobacco smoke restrict their social life has little choice but to inhale virtually the same toxic substances as the smokers in their midst.

Tolerance instead of fresh air

More and more non-smokers are aware that breathing in second-hand smoke increases the risk of breast cancer, bronchitis, asthma and stroke – yet they subordinate their justified concern about such risks to a virtually boundless tolerance of smokers. The tobacco monitoring study from early 2004 shows that, among non-smokers who feel bothered by passive smoking in restaurants or bars, 72% never request strangers not to smoke in their presence.

Focus on the subject of passive smoking

As the evaluation of the 2002 «Smoking is harmful» campaign has shown, the Swiss public is interested

in anything to do with passive smoking, as it is an issue of great concern to it. The new themes of the «Smoking is harmful» prevention campaign have been on display since 24 May and aim to

- inform the public about the latest scientific findings on the dangers of passive smoking,
- raise awareness of passive smoking as a problem and
- provide support for non-smokers to achieve their right to smoke-free air.

The campaign is part of the National Tobacco Prevention Programme and promotes the establishment of non-smoking areas.

We've had it up to here

The campaign depicts everyday situations in which non-smokers are being seriously bothered by, or feel exposed to, tobacco smoke; the protagonists in the ads are, appropriately enough, holding their noses. The two TV spots show a young couple in a bar and children playing at home. The campaign also addresses young adults, who are more likely than other groups to be found at venues where people smoke. Young women in the 20–24 age group are particularly bothered by tobacco smoke. One of the four ads therefore shows a young woman in a trendy club. The previous target group of the «Smoking is harmful» campaign had been adults, and its scope has now been extended to include younger members of this group.

As in the previous year, the campaign will be in two phases. The first will last until the end of June, the second from September to the end of October 2004.

Contact:

Ursula Reinhard, Campaigns and Marketing Section, SFOPH, CH-3003 Berne, tel. +41 031 323 54 59, ursula.reinhard@bag.admin.ch



Forum

Do information campaigns aid prevention in the public-health domain?



Public information campaigns were long regarded by the communication sciences as ineffective. Empirical media-impact research in general and evaluation of individual campaigns in particular had shown that information campaigns only reached people who were

already sensitized and motivated in relation to the issue and well informed on it. More concretely, this means for instance that by a process of selective perception smokers avoid tobacco prevention campaigns, even rejecting them in a kind of boomerang effect as being implausible because the messages communicated are at odds with their own behaviour and create dissonant feelings that are experienced as stress.

Campaign research only gradually came to understand that it was not always the «stubborn» public alone that was to blame for the failure of

many campaigns. On the contrary: campaigns are unsuccessful because they are poorly planned and, on top of that, poorly implemented as well. For a start, many campaigns fail completely or in part to reach their target groups because too little thought has been given to the groups to be addressed, or because shortage of funds prevents the message from being present in the public domain often enough and long enough, or simply because the wrong media have been chosen as channels for the message. Then the message may not be heeded or attract too little attention because the campaign planners have assumed that the targeted group is interested and motivated, which unfortunately is often not the case, or because the message has been conceived with such lack of originality that it fails to stand out effectively from the other messages being communicated around it. And finally the message may be formulated in such a way that it is difficult to understand or it may be rejected by the target group because it is perceived as having too much of a moralizing undertone, i.e. it is too negative and attributes blame to the target group alone.

Modern communication research therefore proceeds on the assumption that information and prevention campaigns may indeed be successful. However, they need to be

planned with specific targets in mind and meticulously implemented, and they should apply the findings of research to practice.

What does this mean in terms of tobacco prevention, for instance? Mass-media information campaigns targeting the population as a whole must create a counterweight to the still ever-present tobacco advertising and its efforts to create a positive image for its products, particularly among young people. Isolated campaigns are, however, unlikely to be effective on their own – they need to be an integral part of a broader programme. Moreover, information campaigns must be intensive enough and prolonged enough for them to have an impact. This, however, presupposes adequate funding. «Quick fixes» don't work in this field!

In addition, information and prevention campaigns should not only target the population as a whole, with the aim of creating awareness of the harm that smoking does. They should also address different target groups with specific messages aimed, for instance, at persuading children and adolescents not to start smoking, helping smokers to give up the habit or encouraging opinion leaders such as parents, teachers, employees in charge of apprentices, etc., to exercise their responsibilities towards young people in this area.

Modern campaign research also

shows that though the message has to be understandable and credible, emotional aspects such as surprise, originality, wit and humour are extremely important, especially among young people. Care should be taken to create an attractive, positive message that triggers emotions and demonstrates realistic and practical solutions, thereby reducing the risk of defensive reactions. Finally, information campaigns must select media that are actually used by the groups targeted, particularly by young people, for instance the cinema, radio or music channels. Conclusions: More original and professional conducted information and prevention campaigns are needed. They are, and will always be, an indispensable component of prevention programmes. And they have a good chance of being effective if they are based on the findings of communication research. On their own, however, they are rarely enough to change public opinion or behaviour. They need to be reinforced by other prevention measures such as restrictions on tobacco advertising, tobacco taxes, etc., and by direct information measures in schools or at the workplace aimed at promoting prevention.

Heinz Bonfadelli, IPMZ (Institute for Mass Communication and Media Research, University of Zurich)