Tobacco: The Growing Epidemic
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Proceedings of the Tenth World Conference on Tobacco or Health, 24-28 August 1997, Beijing, China

With 65 Figures
Foreword and resolutions

The triennial world conference held in Beijing in 1997 marked 30 years of the tobacco control movement and was the first to be held in a developing Asian country. The choice of 'Tobacco: The Growing Epidemic' as the title of the conference and of Beijing as its venue acknowledged both the spread of the epidemic to developing countries in general and the huge size of the tobacco problem in China in particular.

The conference was opened by China's President, Jiang Zemin, in the Great Hall of the People. Some 2000 delegates from 110 countries attended the Conference, including 800 from China.

Although 'Tobacco: The Growing Epidemic' was the major theme of the Conference, 'Women and tobacco' and 'Developing countries' were the twin sub-themes. In deference to these themes, the conference made an unprecedented effort to involve women at all levels, with about 50% representation on the many planning committees and as chairs, speakers, discussants and funded delegates at the conference itself. Equally, a considerable effort was made to fund delegates from developing countries. All of the invited speakers were asked to include these perspectives in their presentations.

In a few countries, there have been substantial decreases in smoking prevalence over the past few decades that are now resulting in substantial decreases in premature death due to tobacco use. Worldwide, however, the general pattern is of an increase. If current high uptake rates and low cessation rates persist, then, partly because of population growth, the current 1.1 thousand million smokers will increase to 1.6 thousand million, and the 3 to 4 million deaths from tobacco use per year during the 1990s will rise to 10 million by 2030.

Large epidemiological studies were released at the conference that show the current patterns of smoking in China, current mortality rates from tobacco and the way in which the epidemic is evolving. Already, one in three of the world's cigarettes is smoked in China, and one in three young men in China will be killed by tobacco use, unless many of the 300 million current smokers stop. For, in China, as in the west, about half of all cigarette smokers will eventually be killed by their habit—but western experience shows that stopping smoking works remarkably well, even after smoking for many years.

Emphasis was placed on different methods of cessation, for if efforts are concentrated only on preventing children from smoking there will be no reduction in the 200 million smoking-related deaths expected to occur before 2030 in people who smoke already.

There were nearly 100 presentations in the plenary and symposium sessions alone, covering tobacco issues in every continent and from diverse viewpoints. The topics included: litigation, legislation, tobacco promotion, world trade and smuggling, addiction and cessation, youth, school, families, passive smoking, occupational health, religion and the effect of tobacco on economies and on the environment. The role of health professionals, the United Nations and, particularly, governments, in tobacco control also came under scrutiny. There is a clear need for governmental regulation of many aspects of tobacco production and use and for inter-governmental action on issues such as transnational tobacco marketing and promotion and on cigarette smuggling and the corruption that accompanies it.

Sports organizations were urged to boycott tobacco sponsorship, as has already been agreed by the Olympics Committee. The economic analyses showed that when all the direct and indirect economic consequences are considered, a reduction in tobacco consumption is good not only for health but also for a country's economy.

One novelty at the conference was the 'how-to' workshops—how to lobby, raise funds, prepare and present papers, introduce tobacco issues into the medical curriculum, free sports from tobacco and network electronically. In relation to the last, the conference had two Internet sites, and the UICC Globalink computers were used by delegates throughout the conference. Even before the conference, three workshops on preparing
abstracts and presenting papers, specifically for delegates to the conference, were held around Asia. Delegates were also offered expert help in the presentation of their papers before their sessions, and an on-the-spot slide-making machine was available.

One controversial decision was that to invite a tobacco-industry scientist, who stated in his abstract that he believes ‘the data do not demonstrate that ETS exposure increases the risk of lung cancer or heart disease’.

A session had been held 'empty' until three weeks before the conference for any last-minute issue of importance, and there was no doubt that this had to be the United States settlement agreement with the tobacco companies. Indeed, the Resolutions Committee received more submissions on this than on any other topic.

The conference was organized by the Chinese Association on Smoking and Health and the Chinese Medical Association under the auspices of several international organizations, including the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the International Union Against Cancer (UICC) and the American Cancer Society.

Chen Ming Zhang (1931–1999)

During his decade as Minister of Public Health, the late Dr Chen Ming Zhang contributed greatly to official recognition of the hazards of tobacco in China, to legislation on tobacco advertising and promotion, to establishment of the nationwide Chinese Association on Smoking and Health and to support for the preparatory work and conduct of the 10th World Congress on Tobacco or Health. His initiatives on tobacco in this century will prevent many premature deaths next century.

The editors would like to note the outstanding contribution of the late Minister of Health, Dr Chen Min-zhang, to the improvement of health in China. His early recognition of the tobacco problem led to important action, especially legislation and the establishment of the Chinese Association on Smoking and Health. We would also like to thank him for his support for the 10th World Conference on Tobacco or Health.

Lu Rushan, Niu Shiru, Judith Mackay and Richard Peto, Editors

The manuscripts were edited and prepared for publication by Professor E. Heseltine.
The views presented at the conference and in these proceedings represent the views of the authors and not necessarily those of the editors or the conference. The following resolutions were, however, adopted at the closing ceremony:

**Resolutions of the Tenth World Conference on Tobacco or Health**

The Conference notes that the current 3.5 million deaths from tobacco annually will increase to 10 million deaths by about 2030 and that the epidemic is expanding, especially in developing countries and among women. Given the overwhelming scientific evidence that tobacco use is responsible for this growing global epidemic of death and disease and that passive smoking is harmful, the Tenth World Conference on Tobacco or Health makes the following resolutions:

1. **Stopping tobacco use**
   The Conference recommends that, since the only way to save millions of lives is by reducing the projected global tobacco-related death toll over the next 20 years, which is over 100 million deaths:
   - the public health community should make strenuous efforts to help people stop using tobacco products.

2. **WHO International Framework Convention on Tobacco Control**
   The Conference recommends that:
   i. WHO and governments formulate an international framework convention to include protocols for comprehensive tobacco control programmes and the recommendations from previous world conferences, which could be made broader and more restrictive over time;
   ii. governments make the necessary financial and technical resources available to WHO to enable it to develop a framework convention on tobacco control, as requested by the Forty-ninth World Health Assembly in 1996;
   iii. WHO undertake urgent work to develop a comprehensive framework convention in time for agreement at the Fifty-third World Health Assembly in 2000;
   iv. all governments agree on the text of a framework convention at the Fifty-third World Health Assembly in 2000 and ratify and bring the convention into force promptly.

3. **United Nations**
   The Conference recommends that:
   i. the United Nations Secretary-General ensure that the issue of tobacco control is a priority at the highest level in the United Nations and its agencies;
   ii. governments take up the issue of international tobacco control at the highest level in the United Nations and secure adequate funding and political commitment for this task throughout the world.

4. **International implications of domestic tobacco control measures**
   The Conference recommends that governments consider the international implications of tobacco control policies or settlements with the tobacco industry, and to ensure that:
   i. such measures do not contribute to an increase in the worldwide epidemic of tobacco-related death and disease;
   ii. the legal rights of those not party to any agreement or policy are fully protected;
   iii. such measures do not inhibit full public scrutiny of the past, present and future activities of the tobacco industry;
   iv. the tobacco industry pays the costs of damage caused by tobacco.
5. **Participation of women and representatives of developing countries and countries in transition**

The Conference recommends that:

i. all bodies concerned with strategic planning and tobacco control policy development, implementation and evaluation, such as the WHO Expert Advisory Panel, increase the involvement and representation of women and of people from developing countries and countries in transition;

ii. future world conferences on tobacco or health follow the successful example of the Tenth World Conference and ensure:
   a. equal representation of women and strong representation of people from developing countries and countries in transition as committee members, plenary speakers, chairpersons and discussants;
   b. that support be provided to allow all key constituencies, including women, minorities and people from developing countries and countries in transition, to participate at all levels.

6. **Reflecting the full human, social and environmental costs of tobacco**

The Conference recommends:

i. the establishment and maintenance of a worldwide system to monitor the tobacco epidemic and the provision of appropriate resources to this end;

ii. that appropriate multilateral agencies and development banks finance and undertake cooperative research programmes to establish a full economic analysis of tobacco growing, production and use, taking into account the costs of damage to the environment, harm to workers, damage to smokers and passive smokers and all other tobacco-induced costs that fall on society;

iii. that those responsible for economic policy and advice, including finance ministries and agencies such as development banks and the International Monetary Fund, ensure that the full health, environmental, social and economic costs of tobacco are represented in the price of tobacco products through taxation.

7. **Denormalization and regulation of tobacco as a harmful substance**

The Conference recommends that:

i. all governments recognize that tobacco is uniquely dangerous and cannot be treated like a normal consumer product because it is the only substance that is both extremely harmful and powerfully addictive when used as intended by its manufacturers, while remaining legal and in widespread use;

ii. all governments subject the contents of tobacco products and smoke and all aspects of the tobacco business to strict and legally binding regulatory control.

8. **Expanding partnerships for a tobacco-free world**

The Conference recommends:

i. that all non-governmental organizations involved in tobacco control support the International Non-governmental Coalition Against Tobacco;

ii. that international networking be established in all sectors involved in tobacco control, such as nursing professionals and religious sectors.
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