

Funded by the National Cancer Institute and reported in *PEDIATRICS*, an official peer-reviewed journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics

# NATIONWIDE STUDY confirms that exposure to tobacco on screen is a major recruiter of new young smokers.

**T**O INVESTIGATE MOVIE SMOKING'S influence on smoking in real life, cancer researchers interviewed 6,500 10-14 year-olds nationwide.

After controlling for twenty other personal, family, social and media factors that might obscure the results, researchers confirmed observations of an earlier two-year study of several thousand students in New England:

- Exposure to on-screen tobacco imagery is strongly associated with teen smoking initiation (FIGURE).
- After adjusting for all other factors, 10-14 year-olds who see the most smoking on screen are nearly *three times more likely to start smoking* than those who see the least.

**T**HIS STRONG ASSOCIATION, combined with adolescents' almost universal exposure to on-screen smoking, leads us to believe that mainstream movies are one of the *most important channels* recruiting new young smokers in the United States.

The massive impact of on-screen tobacco imagery can be mitigated more quickly than other smoking influences. A handful of public

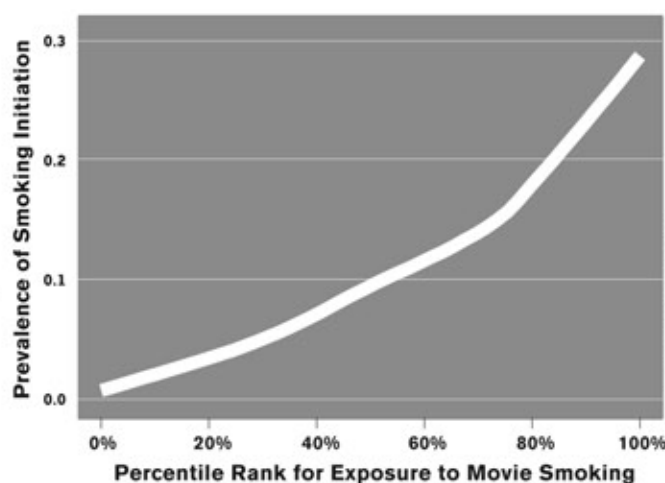
corporations account for an estimated 90 percent of tobacco impressions delivered to U.S. adolescents in theaters. These same corporations already maintain a robust age-classification system for movies, into which tobacco imagery can be more sensibly integrated.

**O**VER THE LAST SIX YEARS, 77 percent of live-action PG-13 films have featured tobacco. PG-13 movies are intensively promoted to the 12-17 year-old age group most susceptible to start smoking; nine of ten smokers begin in their teens.

The U.S. film industry can cut adolescent exposure substantially by extending the R-rating to tobacco imagery. This voluntary step need not result in more films being rated R.

It will simply keep smoking out of future G, PG, and PG-13 films, producing potentially huge public health benefits at virtually no cost.

Preventing young people from starting to use tobacco is the key to reducing the



death and disease caused by tobacco use. Global distribution of U.S. movies has made cutting adolescent exposure to on-screen smoking not only a national but a worldwide health imperative.

**We, the undersigned, expect the major corporations engaged in film production and distribution to embrace their social responsibility and immediately adopt science-based policies, including R-rating of tobacco imagery, to reduce youth exposure and risks to human health.**

Given the compelling evidence, any further delay can only mean the *knowing recruitment of multitudes of new young smokers* by this powerful promotional channel.

**Four thousand teens will try their first cigarette today. Tobacco is the #1 cause of preventable death, killing 438,000 Americans every year.**

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