Tobacco point of purchase warnings

Board of Health
September 8, 2011
Potential regulation

- All businesses in Philadelphia that sell tobacco products (cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, etc.) will have to post, at the point of purchase, a government warning with:
  - Information on the health effects of tobacco use,
  - An image illustrating those effects, and
  - Information on how to get help with quitting
Motivations for the regulation

• Tobacco use remains prevalent and has devastating consequences in Philadelphia

• People continue to underestimate the risks of tobacco use

• Health warnings can increase knowledge and foster quitting

• Tobacco users do not make use of existing quit resources but providing information about them can increase utilization

• Point of purchase information can lead to healthier decisions

• This approach is permissible, feasible, and effective
Tobacco use remains prevalent and has devastating consequences in Philadelphia

- Of the 10 largest cities in the U.S., Philadelphia has the highest rates of adult and youth smoking (1)
  - 1 in 4 adults and 1 in 3 of low-income adults are smokers (2)
  - 11% of youth have smoked once in the past 30 days (3)

- Tobacco use led 2,468 deaths in Philadelphia in 2007, accounting for 17% of all deaths in the city (4)

- Tobacco use resulted in over $800 million in productivity losses in Philadelphia in 2007 (4)
  - This equals approximately $15 of productivity losses for every pack of cigarettes sold. (5)
People continue to underestimate the health risks of tobacco use

• While many smokers are aware of certain health risks, they are less likely to know about the increased risk for stroke, non-lung cancers, poor reproductive health, and disability. (6-8)

• Adults with low socioeconomic status are less knowledgeable about the negative health effects of smoking than those with higher socioeconomic status. (6,9)

• Smokers with greater knowledge of smoking’s health effects are more likely to intend to quit. (8,10)
Health warnings can increase knowledge and foster quitting

• Much of the research on health warnings has been done on cigarette package warning labels. Point of purchase warnings for tobacco products are new.

• Health warnings that make use of text and images are more effective than warnings that just make use of text, particularly for youth. (8,10-14)

• *Graphic* warnings are not necessarily *explicit* or *gruesome*. Rather, they make use of images to make a point (*pictorial, illustrative*).

• Exposure to health warnings is associated with greater knowledge about the health effects of tobacco use, greater intentions to quit, lesser intentions to initiate use, and quitting or cutting down. (10-13, 15)
Providing information can increase utilization of quitting resources by tobacco users

• Use of quitlines doubles the chances of successful quitting. (16)

• Most smokers in Philadelphia who try to quit—particularly African-Americans and Latinos—do so on their own (“cold turkey”). (2)

• Local mass media and digital media efforts have increased Quitline use 7-fold but utilization remains below 2%. (17)

• Including information about quitlines in tobacco-related health warnings significantly increases recognition and use of quitlines as demonstrated in New Zealand, Australia, and the Netherlands. (18-20)
Point of purchase information can lead to healthier decisions

• Menu labeling can lead to healthier choices by consumers. In Philadelphia, 38% of adults who ate at a fast food restaurant used calorie labeling information to choose a lower calorie item. (2,21-23)

• When nutrition information is not available at the point of purchase, only 0.1% of patrons access nutrition information from other sources (e.g., a pamphlet available upon request) before making their purchases. (24)

• Nearly 20 states and numerous cities require businesses that sell alcohol to post warnings about the harms of alcohol use. Analyses suggest that such signs increase awareness and may reduce alcohol consumption among light to moderate drinkers. (25)
References

5. $800 million per year / (290,000 smokers x 0.5 packs per day x 365 days per year) = $15.12/pack
17. Pennsylvania Department of Health, PA Free Quitline.