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OPINIONS ON TOBACCO CONTROL POLICIES IN LAUSANNE, SWITZERLAND, 2003-2006

Running head: opinion on smoking policy in Switzerland

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Abstract

Objective: assess the determinants of opinions regarding tobacco control policies in the Swiss general population.

Methods: Cross sectional study conducted between 2003-6 on a random sample of adult residents of Lausanne, Switzerland aged 35-75 years (2,601 women and 2,398 men). Nine questions on smoking policies were applied.

Results: Ninety-five percent of responders supported policies that would help smokers to quit, 92% no selling of tobacco to subjects aged less than 16 years, 87% a smoking ban in public places and 86% a national campaign against smoking. A further 77% supported a total ban on tobacco advertising, 74% the reimbursement of nicotine replacement therapies and 70% an increase in the price of cigarettes. A lower support was found for two non-evidence based interventions total ban of tobacco sales (35%) and promotion of light cigarettes (22%). Never smokers, women, physically active subjects, teetotallers and subjects with lower educational level were more likely to favour stronger measures while no differences were found between age groups. Reimbursement of nicotine replacement therapies was favoured more by current smokers and inactive subjects.

Conclusion: The vast majority of responders supported the recommended tobacco control policies. Opinions regarding specific interventions vary according to the policy and subjects' characteristics.

In Switzerland, health costs related to smoking have been estimated at 10 billion CHF a year (Office Fédéral de la Santé Publique, 2008b). A comprehensive tobacco prevention program exists, but nationwide implementation of anti-smoking policies is not possible, as this is the responsibility of the cantons. Hence, differences regarding anti-smoking legislation exist between cantons (Office Fédéral de la Santé Publique, 2008a). In order to be successful, a smoking policy must be accepted by the target population. Hence, we assessed the opinions regarding different smoking policies in a representative sample of the Swiss adult population.

The CoLaus study is a cross sectional study conducted between 2003-6 on a representative sample of the Lausanne population aged 35-75 years (Firmann et al., 2008). The Institutional Review Board in Lausanne approved the study protocol and

signed informed consent was obtained. Although the CoLaus study only includes Caucasians and questions might arise whether a population sample drawn in Lausanne is representative of the whole country, a considerable proportion of the city's population is non-Swiss or comes from other cantons. In 2006, out of the 128,231 Lausanne inhabitants, 38% were non-Swiss, 30% came from other Swiss cantons and only 32% were actually from the Vaud canton. Nine questions on smoking policies were distributed to 4,999 participants (2,601 women; mean (SD) age 52.7 (10.6) years; 20% had completed basic school, 37% apprenticeship, 23% secondary school and 20% university; 73% were alcohol drinkers and 56% had leisure-time physical activity at least twice per week), of which 33.6% were former and 27.7% current smokers. Two ineffective interventions to prevent smoking were suggested: a total ban of tobacco sales and promotion of "light" cigarettes.

No selling of tobacco to minors was the most supported policy (**table 1**) and support rates were higher than previously reported for Switzerland (Krebs et al., 2008). Also, the large support for a total ban of tobacco advertising is interesting as Switzerland does not forbid tobacco advertising (Office Fédéral de la Santé Publique, 2008b). Subjects with lower educational level favoured stronger measures while no differences were found between age groups. The higher support of smoking policies by lower educated subjects was unexpected, as this group is usually less motivated to quit (Edwards et al., 2007). Never smokers, women, physically active subjects and teetotallers also favoured stronger measures.

These findings are in agreement with the literature (Doucet et al., 2007; Yang et al., 2007) and indicate that self-interest still plays an important role in influencing attitudes against smoking in Switzerland. Still, as reported previously (Carter, Chapman, 2006), current smokers favoured the reimbursement of nicotine replacement therapies and of measures aimed at quitting smoking. Interestingly, one of the strategic objectives of the Swiss National Programme against Tobacco (Office Fédéral de la Santé Publique, 2008b) is to encourage current smokers to quit smoking, albeit no specific measures are provided. According to our findings, the reimbursement of nicotine replacement therapies would be widely accepted and could be implemented at a reasonable cost. Finally, the two non-evidence based measures were favoured by less than 40% of responders (**table 1**), indicating a good knowledge of lay people on the inefficiency of some methods to stop smoking.

In summary, an antismoking policy combining prohibitive (no selling of tobacco to minors, smoking ban in public spaces), informative (national campaign against smoking) and incitative (helping smokers quitting; reimbursement of nicotine replacement therapies) measures would be accepted by a large part of the Swiss population.

Conversely, other measures such as increasing the cost of tobacco products or a total ban on tobacco advertising would be favoured only by some groups.

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Table 1: Support of smoking policies by adult residents of Lausanne, Switzerland, 2003-2006.

Policy	1	2	3^(a)	4	5	6^(a)	7	8	9
All subjects (n=4,999)	87.4	92.2	34.8	77.7	69.8	22.5	86.2	74.5	95.2
Gender									
Women (n=2,601)	89.1	93.6	35.1	80.7	70.4	25.6	88.3	76.3	96.7
Men (n=2,398)	85.5	90.7	34.4	74.5	69.5	19.2	83.9	72.6	93.7
Test	15.0 ***	15.3 ***	0.25 NS	27.3 ***	0.20 NS	28.4 ***	20.4 ***	9.05 **	23.7 ***
Education									
Basic (n=988)	86.7	95.2	46.8	80.0	63.9	35.1	85.8	81.0	96.7
Apprentice (n=1,851)	86.4	93.2	31.3	75.3	65.4	24.6	85.5	71.9	94.4
Secondary (n=1,161)	88.5	90.9	32.1	78.4	72.8	18.8	88.1	74.1	95.9
University (n=997)	88.6	88.9	32.7	79.4	80.2	10.4	85.6	73.4	94.5
Test	4.61 NS	32.5 ***	76.7 ***	11.2 **	88.8 ***	183 ***	4.58 NS	28.7 ***	9.47 *
Age group									
[35-44] (n=1,442)	87.5	90.4	37.9	76.8	70.4	17.4	84.3	74.6	94.9
[45-54] (n=1,454)	86.8	92.0	35.0	79.0	68.3	20.2	86.7	75.8	94.6
[55-64] (n=1,365)	87.0	93.3	32.0	78.5	70.2	26.0	86.9	74.9	96.0
[65+] (n=722)	88.8	94.2	33.2	75.7	70.7	30.6	87.3	71.1	95.8
Test	1.93 NS	12.5 **	11.5 **	4.30 NS	2.13 NS	61.3 ***	5.92 NS	5.71 NS	3.87 NS
Smoking status									
Never (n=1,930)	94.5	95.1	39.3	81.8	82.2	26.0	90.6	71.8	95.6
Former (n=1,677)	88.7	90.6	31.7	79.3	74.8	18.7	88.4	70.4	94.8
Current (n=1,374)	75.8	90.1	32.1	70.1	46.1	22.2	77.2	83.3	95.3
Test	257 ***	37.5 ***	28.5 ***	66.4 ***	524 ***	27.0 ***	128 ***	78.1 ***	1.11 NS
Physical activity									
No (n=2,199)	84.6	92.6	36.9	76.8	65.1	23.5	83.9	77.8	95.1
Yes (n=2,800)	89.5	91.9	33.0	78.5	73.5	21.7	88.0	71.9	95.4
Test	26.6 ***	0.69 NS	8.06 **	2.01 NS	41.1 ***	2.12 NS	17.1 ***	22.3 ***	0.25 NS
Alcohol consumption									
No (n=1,333)	91.6	93.3	41.6	81.6	71.4	26.2	88.1	78.2	95.4

Yes (n=3,666)	85.8	91.8	32.3	76.3	69.2	21.2	85.5	73.2	95.2
Test	29.0 ***	3.0 ^{NS}	36.9 ***	15.8 ***	2.24 ^{NS}	14.0 ***	5.5 *	13.0 ***	0.14 ^{NS}

Data from a cross sectional study conducted between 2003-6 on a representative sample of the Swiss population aged 35-75 years (2,601 women and 2,398 men). Results are expressed as percentage of subjects favouring the measure. Policies: 1. Smoking ban in public spaces; 2. No selling of tobacco to subjects <16 years; 3. Total ban of tobacco sales; 4. Total ban of tobacco advertising; 5. Increase the price of a pack of cigarettes; 6. Promotion of "light" cigarettes; 7. National campaign against smoking; 8. Reimbursement of nicotine replacement therapies; 9. Help smokers who wish to stop. ^(a) non-evidence based measure. Statistical analysis by chi-square: ^{NS}, not significant; *, p<0.05; **, p<0.01; ***, p<0.001.