



For Immediate Release

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Tobacco Industry Using Coupons to Keep Women and Young People Addicted

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn., December 12, 2012 – Tobacco companies’ aggressive coupon marketing tactics may reduce the likelihood that current smokers will quit, according to new research published in *Tobacco Control*, an international peer-reviewed journal. This report is the first-of-its-kind to illustrate that cigarette coupons have a negative association on smoking cessation.

“We know that raising the price of cigarettes encourages smokers to quit. Coupons are a way to bring the price down, and keep people smoking,” said Dr. Kelvin Choi, Research Associate at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health, and lead author of the article. “Smokers who receive these coupons think the tobacco industry cares about their health and well-being, even though industry documents prove that they know their products are addictive and deadly.”

Dr. Choi analyzed data collected through the Minnesota Adult Tobacco Survey (MATS) Cohort Study, funded by ClearWay MinnesotaSM, which recruited 2,436 participants who were smokers and recent quitters in 2007, and surveyed them between 2008 and 2010.

The findings include:

- Nearly half of smokers reported receiving cigarette coupons.
- Eighty percent of those who received coupons redeemed them.
- Women, younger smokers and heavier smokers are disproportionately targeted by coupons.
- Smokers who use coupons are more likely to believe that tobacco companies care about their health, do their best to make cigarettes safe and tell the truth.
- Smokers who redeem coupons are 84 percent less likely to quit smoking.

Tobacco companies are restricted from using many forms of marketing and advertising. They also know that higher tobacco prices encourage smokers to quit. Cigarette coupons, disseminated through direct mail marketing or other promotional channels, is a legal way for them to reach consumers, counteract rising tobacco prices and keep smokers addicted.

Watch this [video](#) to see an example of the coupon redemption process.

“This research is another reminder that tobacco is still a big problem in Minnesota,” said Molly Moilanen, Director of Public Affairs at ClearWay Minnesota. “Stronger policies can counteract the tobacco companies’ tactics. We know a \$1.50 per pack tobacco price increase will help more than

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30,000 Minnesota adults quit smoking and prevent thousands of kids from becoming addicted adult smokers.”

Currently, New York is the only state that does not allow retailers to use cigarette coupon programs to sell cigarettes under their minimum legal price. There are 25 other states, including Minnesota, that regulate minimum cigarette prices, but they do not prohibit the use of promotional coupon programs. Updating regulations to restrict the use of coupons would further encourage smokers to cut back and quit. For more information on this research, visit www.clearwaymn.org/research.

Since 2000, ClearWay Minnesota has awarded more than \$19 million in grants to Minnesota researchers. The impact of ClearWay Minnesota-funded research has been felt well beyond Minnesota’s borders and has significantly contributed to the science base in the field of tobacco control.

ClearWay Minnesota is an independent, non-profit organization that improves the health of Minnesotans by reducing the harm caused by tobacco. ClearWay Minnesota serves Minnesota through its grant-making program, QUITPLAN® stop-smoking services and statewide outreach activities. It is funded with 3 percent of the state’s 1998 tobacco settlement. For more information on ClearWay Minnesota or QUITPLAN Services, call (952) 767-1400 or visit clearwaymn.org.

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