

Can applying messages to cigarettes dissuade us from smoking?

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Two academics from Bangor University's renowned Business School have been applying their knowledge of marketing and managerial studies to investigate a new medium for getting the no-smoking message across- the cigarette itself.

Dr Hassan and Prof. Shiu published a piece of research in the journal *Tobacco Control* that explored an innovative extension of the frontier in anti-tobacco policy initiatives by governments.

The world has seen successively more restrictive [tobacco control](#) measures in place, such as a ban on tobacco advertising, mandatory text and pictorial [health warnings](#) on pack, various clear air acts limiting places where smoking is allowed, and more recently the removal of branding information on cigarette packaging with the plain packaging legislation implemented in some countries such as Australia. However, the cigarette stick design has by and large remained unchanged and free of promotional or product information, as well as health warnings.

Hassan and Shiu's research examined the potential of health warnings printed on the cigarette stick through two related studies. Prior research shows that smokers have shorter life expectancy by around 14 years, with a typical cigarette 'costing' 11 minutes of life lost. Based on these past findings, cigarettes (photograph in Study 1 and a 'real' one in Study 2) were created and shown to smokers in Hassan and Shiu's research. The mock-up cigarette displayed 11 minute time lines together with the warning that "each puff reduces your life expectancy by ...". Results of both studies show a significant increase in smokers' quit intentions after exposure to the mock-up cigarette (6.9 % in Study 1, and 15.7% in Study 2). Hassan and Shiu's research is timely given the move towards plain packaging, with strong incentive for tobacco companies to relocate branding information on to the cigarette stick. The research also has wider impact as despite bans on

the sale of single cigarettes, this practice is still prevalent in parts of the world.

Dr Hassan commented: "This is only the start in the investigation of the potential of including a health message on the cigarette stick and there needs to be much more research in this area to understand the tangible benefits that might arise."

More information: "No place to hide: two pilot studies assessing the effectiveness of adding a health warning to the cigarette stick." Louise M Hassan, Edward Shiu. *Tob Control*, 13 December 2013 [DOI: 10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2013-051238](https://doi.org/10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2013-051238)

Provided by Bangor University

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