



Dr. Lionel Blackman

Ten Key Facts on smoking and health controversy

6 Despite a never ending stream of research on the possible health hazards of smoking, there is no proof of a cause and effect relationship between cigarette smoking and various alleged smoking diseases.

This "Key Fact" comes from Dr Lionel Blackman, director of research and development of BAT, the Three Fives tobacco group.

He points out that the evidence the anti-smoking bodies "select to argue their case is anything but unbiased, and yet their view is the one that tend to monopolise the media which govern public opinion."

Dr Blackman feels that "constant repetition alone is sometimes enough to give unsubstantiated statements a 'ring of truth' — in other words, the 'propaganda' has been proving successful."

At a presentation on the smoking and health controversy, which he gave to staff at the BAT headquarters in Woking, Surrey, he offered this list of ten Key Facts —

1 Despite all the claims of those opposed to smoking, there is no proof of a cause and effect relationship between cigarette smoking and the development of the various alleged smoking related diseases.

2 There has been a dramatic reduction in tar and nicotine levels in cigarettes since the mid-1960s, both in the United Kingdom and worldwide.

3 Data currently available is derived from long term statistical studies of smoking and health. Such studies can only relate to those who began to smoke cigarettes with much higher "tar" and nicotine yields than are now being smoked — and no studies to date are relevant to the very low yield products that are beginning to be a significant part of the market.

4 A number of scientific authorities suggest that the reduction in the deliveries of "tar," nicotine and other components of tobacco smoke is primarily responsible for the reduced incidence of alleged smoking associated diseases now being seen in the UK and elsewhere.

5 Carbon monoxide is a natural by-product of combustion processes (e.g., fires, cars, cigarettes). It has been impugned as a harmful constituent of cigarette smoke, but the general view of medical science is that healthy individuals are well able to tolerate the low levels that are inhaled by smokers.

6 Nicotine has been equally much discussed. With regard to any alleged association with cardiovascular disease, it has been found that while nicotine levels (or the breakdown product, cotinine) in the blood system of cigar and pipe smokers are as high as those among cigarette smokers, according to the statistics there is no increased risk of coronary diseases among cigar and pipe smokers, even with their elevated nicotine/cotinine levels.

7 Bearing in mind the views of many independent medical authorities about the lower yield products, it may be noted that there are now commercial products available in the UK which yield only 3 per cent the "tar," 3 per cent the nicotine and 7.5 per cent the carbon monoxide — of a typical pre-1960s cigarette. Moreover, if the tobacco industry is left free to develop new products there will continue to be a reduction in the tar and nicotine deliveries — as determined in the last analysis by consumer choice.

8 Despite the strong anti-smoking pressures in recent years, the general worldwide trend of smoking is upwards.

9 BAT, as the leading tobacco company in the world, take a very serious approach to all aspects of the smoking issue. They undertake a great deal of related research, both at the Group Research and Development Centre at Southampton, and also in the laboratories of major overseas companies.

10 It is estimated that the tobacco industry worldwide contributes around £100 million per annum to smoking related research, either in-house or in support of independent scientists.

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