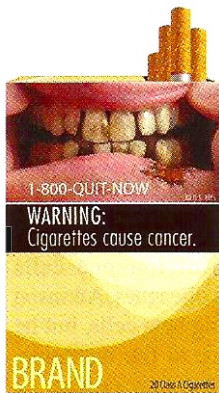


Smokers Respond to Pictorial Health Warnings

IN THE NEWS & ANALYSIS STORY "ANTISMOKING DRIVE TRIES CIGARETTE ads, in reverse" (S. Reardon, 1 July, p. 23), social psychologist Carol Tavris expressed doubts about the effectiveness of pictorial health warnings on tobacco packaging. However, there is extensive evidence supporting the effectiveness of this strategy (1). Survey results show that whether a smoker notices the warnings and how he or she reacts to them are consistent prospective predictors of making quit attempts (2). Studies also report increased use of telephone-based smoking cessation (quit-line) services in response to the introduction of such pictorial warnings in Australia (3), Brazil (4), and New Zealand [short term (5) and longer term (6)]. Similar responses have been reported when new



text-based health warnings, which also featured a quitline number, were introduced in the Netherlands (7) and the United Kingdom (8). There is little doubt that pictorial health warnings are effective, but there is still a need for ongoing research to identify the most effective images and wording in different countries and the optimal frequency at which pictures should be replaced with new images. Research should also explore cost-effectiveness, which is likely to be high.

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