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Cigarette Smoking in: The Case of Florida**

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**How Americans Learned about the Dangers of Cigarette
Smoking in: The Case of Florida**

ABSTRACT

The rate of cigarette smoking in America from the 1950s until the present has dropped from 44% to about 18%. The causes of this decline can be traced to concrete measures such as the prohibition of smoking in public areas, and the increase in cigarette taxes, making it more expensive for regular smokers to maintain their habits. However, underlying these changes has been a growing awareness of the health dangers from smoking. From 1950 until 1964, medical and scientific researchers announced the results of experiments and survey data that showed a strong positive correlation between cigarette smoking and various diseases, beginning with lung cancer, but eventually including COPD, heart disease, and other forms of cancer. This paper focusses on the spread of the scientific and medical information into the public domain. Specifically, it shows how the scientific information was “retailed” to the general public via national newspapers like the New York Times, and national newsmagazines, like Time, Life, and Reader’s Digest. Almost immediately, this national news was diffused and transmitted through local newspapers and other forms, such as pamphlets and films by the American Cancer Society and other health-related organizations. In order to show how this happened in particular localities, I have concentrated my research on cities in the state of Florida. However, I believe that virtually the same process was taking place in other states and other cities. The paper reveals the importance of the written word as the pre-eminent form of popularization, a situation far different from the forms of popularization in our own “internet era.”

From the 1950s until the present, the rate of cigarette smoking among American adults has dropped from a high of 44% to about 18%. This reduction in the smoking rate has been accomplished through many means, including increased taxation on cigarettes and regulations banning cigarette smoking from most public areas, both of which discouraged smokers from continuing their habits. Beyond these concrete measures there has been a gradual change in the general opinion about the social acceptability of smoking. In many communities and populations, smokers are seen as pariahs, engaging in a habit which signifies their ignorance and/or weakness.

Underlying these measures has been a change of public opinion about the dangers of cigarette smoking that began in 1950 and has widened throughout the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Slowly but surely, Americans have become convinced that smoking is dangerous to their health and, although smoking itself remains legal, the number of American smokers has dropped by nearly two-thirds. The effort to spread scientific and medical information about health risks has been one of the most successful public history campaigns in American history, despite the denials by the tobacco industry that any causal relationship had been proven. This paper is about how this campaign was conducted, and how this information was received, especially in the state of Florida, between 1950 and the 1990s. I have chosen to restrict my local research to a single state, in order to demonstrate how much of the “national” news was translated and received at the local level. However, my less intensive research on the topic in other states indicates that what happened in Florida was replicated throughout the country.

Publication of Scientific Studies Tying Smoking to Lung Cancer

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s the incidence of lung cancer, especially among men, was skyrocketing, as was the number of Americans who smoked cigarettes; by the 1950s, the rate was approaching 50%. Given the overlap between these two trends, and the previous concern about the bad effects of smoking on the respiratory system, some physicians and scientists began to wonder whether there was a causal relationship between the two. This curiosity was soon translated into scientific studies about the causal relationship between smoking and lung cancer. Given the widespread concern about cancer generally, and lung cancer specifically, these studies were widely publicized in national newspapers like the *New York Times* and local daily newspapers; in weekly newsmagazines like *Time*, *Life*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News and World Report*; and, of course, in the powerful monthly *Reader's Digest*. The readership of these magazines was not limited only to the families that subscribed to them. During the 1940s and 1950s, when households were not as well-off as they later became, many magazines were “passed along” from one family to the next, or read while people were in the waiting rooms of doctors, dentists, accountants, and even auto mechanics. This form of readership, which

was common 50 or 60 years ago, may be compared to the internet browsing that many of us do today on our electronic devices.

In May, 1950, two American studies were published in the same issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA), and in the same year a comparable British study was published in the *British Medical Journal*. The American authors, Ernst Wynder and Dr. Evarts Graham, and Dr. Morton L. Levin, and the British authors, Drs. A. Bradford Hill and Richard Doll, in their statistical studies of lung cancer patients, showed that the vast majority of those persons who had contracted the disease had been cigarette smokers. This common finding supported what many scientists and even lay persons had suspected over the past several years. The *New York Times* was one of the first newspapers to report on the JAMA articles. On May 27, 1950, the NYT published an article entitled, "Smoking Found Tied to Cancer of Lungs; 94.1% of Males Studied Used Cigarettes," began with this ominous warning: "Two reports in the current issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, published yesterday, warned that there appears to be a significant relationship between prolonged tobacco smoking and the development of cancer of the lung."

The story was also carried in some of the weekly newsmagazines. Typical of the extensive coverage of these studies was an article in *Newsweek* published on June 12, 1950: "Last week in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, a survey brought this relationship [between lung cancer and smoking] out of the rumor category with statistics to show that the more heavily a person smokes, the greater are his chances of being afflicted."

As was the case with most of the scientific studies of this period, articles linking cigarette smoking and lung cancer appeared newly simultaneously in the local press. On July 18, 1950, the *Miami Herald* reported the findings in an article entitled, "Smoking Blamed In Lung Cancers," noting that "three teams of scientists Monday blamed smoking, especially cigarets, for apparently causing part of the increase in lung cancer, the fastest growing type of cancer in the United States." On the same day, the *Palm Beach Post* published a similar article, "Smoking Blamed in Lung Cancer," noting that "20,000 Americans die each year of lung cancer now," a rate three times higher than the incidence of lung cancer reported just a decade earlier.

The message of these 1950 reports linking smoking and lung cancer was soon echoed in other studies. In an article published on October 21, 1951, "Cigaretts Blamed For Increase in Cancer Of Lung," the *Palm Beach Post* quoted the famous cancer authority, Dr. Alton Ochsner, as asserting that "the man of 50 who smokes a pack or more of cigarets per day has 50 times as much chance of developing lung cancer than does a non-smoker."

In 1952, British Drs. Doll and Hill published a second study, based on a much broader population base, again showing the relationship between smoking and lung cancer. *Time* covered this breaking story under the headline, "Smoking & Cancer" in its December 22, 1952, issue. "There is a definite relationship between smoking and lung cancer, conclude two statisticians working for Britain's Medical Research Council, Drs. Richard Doll and

Professor A. Bradford Hill. In sum, they say the association between smoking and carcinoma of the lung is real.”

In Florida, the *Miami Herald* on December 13, 1952, reported on the Doll and Hill findings in an article entitled “Study Links Lung Cancer To Smoking,” while at about the same time the *Ft. Lauderdale Daily News* noted that at a recent New York Dental meeting, Dr. Ernest Wynder said flatly that “prolonged and heavy use of cigarets increases up to 20 times the risk of developing cancer of the lung.” (“Cigarets Can Cause Lung Cancer,” Dec. 10, 1953)

Another well-publicized study of 1953 was the so-called “mouse-painting” study, conducted by Drs. Wynder and Graham, who had published the earlier article in 1950, and a new associate, Ms. Adele Croninger. The three researchers shaved the backs of laboratory mice, and then painted their backs with cigarette tars that had been collected by a “smoking machine.” Within a short period of time, they found that a considerable number of the animals grew cancerous tumors. This experiment was presented as the first laboratory confirmation of a finding that until then had been entirely statistical. The finding was widely-covered by the popular press. *Time*, for example, had a report on the study in its issue of November 30, 1953, entitled “Beyond any Doubt:” “For cigarette smokers, famed surgeon Evarts A. Graham of St. Louis had news last week. ‘Dr. Ernst L. Wynder and I have reproduced cancer experimentally in mice by using merely the tars from cigarette smoke. This shows conclusively that there is something in cigarette smoke which can produce cancer. This is no longer merely a possibility. Our experiments have proved it beyond any doubt.’”

Life, with a circulation of five and a half million by the mid-1950s, was the leading pictorial weekly newsmagazine and another major source of public readership. The pictures of the “mouse painting” researchers, their apparatus, and the laboratory animals were visually very dramatic and thus perfect for *Life’s* format. *Life* reported: “The cause of the current challenge to a major national habit was the discussion of research by Dr. Evarts Graham and Adele Croninger of St. Louis’ Washington University and Dr. Ernst Wynder of the Sloan Kettering Institute of New York. They had repeatedly painted the skins of mice with cigarette tar, inducing skin cancer in 44 percent of the animals.” (“Smoke Gets in the News,” December 21, 1953)

Nineteen-fifty-four saw an enormous amount of publicity about smoking and lung cancer. Directly on the heels of the mouse-painting study and the New York Dental Society meeting was the report out of the Roswell Park Memorial Institute in Buffalo, New York, which was reported in the *Palm Beach Post* on February 12, 1954, “Another Study Shows Tobacco And Cancer Link.” This survey of 2,759 of the Institute’s patients showed “a link between tobacco and cancer.”

However, the really astounding news of 1954 was the preliminary report of the American Cancer Society study by Drs. E. Cuyler Hammond and Daniel Horn. The two researchers, using many volunteer data-gatherers from the ACS, surveyed 187,000 men between the ages of 50 and 70, the prime age at which

they would be likely to develop lung cancer, heart disease, and other potentially fatal maladies. They intended to follow the men for five years; but the data they gathered was so startling that they issued a preliminary report after only 20 months, at the June 1954 meeting of the American Medical Association. It was a “prospective study,” in contrast to the earlier statistical studies, which had been “retrospective.” In other words, rather than starting with data from individuals who had already developed lung cancer, and looking back at their remembered smoking histories, Hammond and Horn focused on men who were healthy when the study began, made note of their smoking practices, and then watched for which of those men developed lung cancer or other diseases which killed them. The preliminary result was big news because the ACS study—despite its design differences—was presented as confirmation of the earlier statistical studies which had been retrospective and considerably more limited.

Within days of Hammond and Horn presenting their report at the AMA meeting, it was covered by the mass media, especially by the previously-cited weekly newsmagazines. For example, *Time* covered it under the title “Smoking & Cancer (Contd.),” (July 5, 1954). The title itself a recognition that this was an ongoing story that would have many more chapters. Dr. Hammond noted that he and Horn had taken the records of 187,766 men between the ages of 50 and 70, and had followed their lives. In the 20 months since the beginning of the study 4,854 had died. “Among the 4,854 deaths, Hammond told a packed house, were 745 men who daily smoked a pack of cigarettes or more. Their death rate was almost twice as high as that of the men who had never smoked.”

The July 2, 1954, issue of *U.S. News and World Report* also covered the report. The bold lettering on the cover stated: “Latest Findings, Does Smoking Shorten Life?” The deadly impact of smoking was the conclusion of the several studies that had been published from 1950 onward, and the starkness of the magazine’s presentation of the question mirrored the dramatic impact it had on the country at that time.

The 1954 ACS study was covered by both national and local newspapers. On July 22, 1954, the *New York Times* published a story entitled, “Cigarettes Found to Raise Death Rate in Men 50 to 70.” The *Times* reported that the ACS researchers found that “lung cancer deaths were at least three times, and possibly even nine times, as common as smokers as among nonsmokers.” In Jacksonville, the *Florida Times-Union* carried a story about the Hammond/Horn report in an article entitled “ACS Avers Smokers More Susceptible to Diseases” on June 22, 1954. Quoting from the report, the paper concluded, “Compared with nonsmokers, those heavy cigarette smokers run a greater risk not only of lung cancer but other types of cancer as well.” Most Florida daily papers carried stories about the ACS study, including the *Gainesville Sun* (“Cigarette smokers found to die sooner in 50-to-70 age group,” June 21, 1954); the *Miami Herald* (“Cigaretts Double Death Rate In Cancer and Heart Cases,” June 22, 1954); and the *Palm Beach Post* (“Cigarettes Cut Years Off American Lives, June 22, 1954). An important result of these studies was the publication of health warnings to smokers. Later that year the *Miami Herald*

reported that the Public Health Cancer Association “voted to advise the public to stop smoking cigarettes to reduce the incidence of lung cancer.” (“Give Up Smoking Cigaretts, Cancer Group Tells Public,” October 12, 1954)

A year after the preliminary findings of the Hammond and Horn ACS study had been publicised, a follow-up study reported that there was hope for those smokers who quit. On June 7, 1955, the *New York Times* reported that the ACS “study of 188,000 aging men for thirty-two months suggested that those who stopped smoking cigarettes had a much lower death rate than those who continued to smoke. Florida newspapers were quick to publish the hopeful results of the ACS follow-up study. On June 6, 1955, the *Ft. Lauderdale Daily News* published a front-page article holding out hope for those smokers who managed to quit, “Lung Cancer Risk Seen Less If Cigaret Smoking Halted.” On the same day the *Gainesville Sun* published “Non-smokers may cut risk of lung cancer;” while on June 7, 1955, the *Tampa Tribune* on its front page ran an article entitled, “Researchers Say Giving Up Smoking Cuts Cancer Risk.”

The causal relationship between smoking and lung cancer motivated researchers to investigate possible connections between smoking and other pulmonary diseases. For example, on December 9, 1955, the *Miami Herald* reported on a finding by four doctors at an American Medical Association meeting that “cigarette smoking may be even more hazardous than has been hitherto recognized,” because it “may be the cause of many cases of an ailment called pulmonary emphysema—rupture of the tiny air sacs in the lung.” (“Lung Ruptures Tied To Cigaret Smoking”) The researchers based their conclusions on “a study of 40 patients with chronic ‘obstructive pulmonary emphysema’ all of whom had been heavy smokers of cigarettes.” On February 3, 1956, Dr. Ernest Wynder, in an address to the leaders and staff of the American Cancer Society said that “cigarette smoking causes 80 per cent of all male lung cancer fatalities,” and he also noted that “cigarette smoking was a cause of cancer of the larynx.” (“Cigaretts Called Top Cancer Cause,” *Ft. Lauderdale Daily News*, February 3, 1956; and “Cancer Research Again Hits Cigaretts,” *Ft. Lauderdale Daily News*, February 27, 1956)

In addition to articles in magazines and newspapers, another way in which the link between cigarettes and lung cancer was publicized to the American populace was through the then-new medium of television. For example, “See it Now” was an early weekly news show broadcast on CBS. “See it Now” was the prototype of our contemporary show, “60 Minutes,” and was hosted by the most famous television journalist of that time, Edward R. Murrow. It was remarkable that in May and June of 1955 Murrow took two entire programs of “See it Now” in back-to-back weeks to lay out a whole hour’s coverage of what he called the “cigarette controversy.”

Although some concerned scientists believed that it was crucial to get word out to the public about the causal link between cigarettes and lung cancer, others thought that the causality was so widely known that further publicity was superfluous. For example, in Congressional hearings in July 1957, Dr. Leroy Burney, who was the Surgeon General during much of the 1950s, said,

“Our position is that we have informed the public through excellent coverage of the press, radio, and TV.”

A 1957 investigation deemed “The Seven Experts Study” was an important event in publicizing the link between smoking and lung cancer and produced the first of the great “evaluative” studies. For the previous seven years, scientists and doctors had been publishing the results of their research. In 1957, four health-oriented organizations commissioned a study by seven experts to evaluate these accumulating reports on the relationship between cigarette smoking and lung cancer. Since the Seven Experts Study was the first of its kind, the public report was widely covered in both the national and the local press. The *New York Times* on March 23, 1957, covered it as a front-page story about the effect of the Seven Experts Study on the tobacco markets: “Tobaccos Decline in a Dull Market; Cancer Study Causes Sell-Off.” The *New York Times* considered this study so important that it published the entire text of the report.

Time magazine published its report in its April 1, 1957, issue under the title, “Smoking & Cancer (Contd.)” and concluded, “Cigarette smoking is indeed a major cause of lung cancer.” *Newsweek*, in its coverage on the same day, echoed that judgment: “The sum total of scientific evidence establishes beyond reasonable doubt that cigarette smoking is a causative factor in the rapidly increasing incidence of human epidermoid carcinoma [that is, cancer] of the lung.” The *Florida Times-Union* also covered the story on March 23, 1957, in a story entitled “Smoking Linked to Lung Cancer.” Quoting from the report, the story summarized, “Lung cancer occurs much more frequently—5 to 15 times—among smokers than among nonsmokers and there is a direct relationship between the incidence of lung cancer and the amount smoked.”

Just three months later, the final report of the ACS Hammond/Horn study was released. A preliminary report was first released in 1954 after only 20 months of gathering data because the authors recognized that the preliminary results of this longevity study were so startling. The scientific community wondered whether the complete report, after five full years, would yield the same dramatic results. It did. The *New York Times* on June 5, 1957, published an article that focused on the “excess” deaths that were caused by smoking among the 50-70 year old men. (“7,316 Smokers’ Death Show ‘Excess’ of 2665”) The June 17, 1957, issue of *Time* under the headline of “Smoking & Health,” summarized the ACS report’s results: “1) all smoking shortens life; 2) cigarette smoking is by far the worst offender, and the risk goes up with the amount smoked.” The ACS report results were also covered in a *Florida Times-Union* story of June 5, 1957, entitled “Heavy Use of Cigarettes Held Shortening Life 7 to 8 Years.” The story concluded, “the study declared regular cigarette smokers die from lung cancer ten times more frequently than nonsmokers,” and “smokers run 70 per cent greater risk of fatal coronary heart disease than nonsmokers.” In the *Jacksonville Journal*, Dr. Walter C. Alvarez, a syndicated medical columnist, reported on the ACS report in his column “How to Live” on July 9, 1957.

The government reaction to the ACS report was swift and definitive. On July 12, Surgeon General Leroy Burney said that “there is increasing and consistent evidence that excessive cigarette smoking is one of the causes of lung cancer.” Surgeon General Burney said that studies have confirmed “beyond a reasonable doubt” that there is a high degree of statistical association between lung cancer and prolonged heavy smoking. The *Jacksonville Journal* reported from Congressional Hearings on filter cigarettes that E. Cuyler Hammond testified that “‘the evidence is overwhelming’ that cigarette smoking leads to lung cancer” (July 18, 1957). The *Florida Times-Union* covered Dr. Burney’s statement in its July 13, 1957, issue in a story entitled “Evidence of Cancer, Cigarette Link Growing Health Unit Says.” The story concluded, “Surgeon General Leroy E. Burney, a pipe smoker, said ‘an analysis of 18 independent studies has confirmed beyond reasonable doubt that there is a high degree of statistical association between lung cancer and heavy and prolonged cigarette smoking,’[while] Clarence Cook Little, chairman of the Scientific Advisory Committee of the tobacco industry research committee, responded to the report, saying it ‘adds nothing new to what has been known about the causes of lung cancer.’”

In the *Florida Times-Union*, as in most Florida newspapers, articles about smoking and health which contained an industry statement which denied that the causal relationship between smoking and lung cancer—or any disease for the matter—had been scientifically proven. For example, The *New York Times* featured the conclusions of Dr. Burney’s report in an article on July 13, 1957, entitled, “U.S. Links Cancer With Cigarettes.” The article went into great detail not only about Dr. Burney’s statements, but also about the history of tobacco research since 1950. At the very end of the article, Dr. Timothy Hartnett, a spokesman for the tobacco industry, is quoted as mentioning a few studies that dispute the causal relationship between cigarettes and lung cancer. We see the industry’s position in articles published in Florida newspapers, including the following: “Smokers Advised To Quit,” *Miami Herald*, June 7, 1955; “Survey Shows Smoking Links To Early Death,” *Palm Beach Post*, June 5, 1957; and *Tampa Tribune*, “U.S. Surgeon Says Filters Don’t Reduce Cancer Hazard,” November 27, 1959.

Another highly reported study was the Veterans’ Study of 1958, based on more than 200,000 American servicemen who had taken out life insurance policies with the federal government between 1917 and 1940. When the servicemen’s heirs collected on those life insurance policies, they had to produce a death certificate which listed the cause of death. From that data, Public Health Service researchers did a study to see whether there was a statistical correlation between smoking and early death. Here’s how the *Florida Times-Union*, on July 6, 1958, reported those findings: “The main findings are that smokers had a death rate 33 percent higher than nonsmokers and that smokers of cigarettes alone had a rate of 58 percent higher than nonsmokers.”

The last big smoking story of 1958 was the report of Dr. Oscar Auerbach’s pathological study of “19,797 exquisitely thin slivers of tissue from human

lungs,” showing that the lungs of those patients who had died of lung cancer showed cellular abnormalities in the bronchial tree which was caused by prolonged cigarette smoking. (*Time*, “Smoking & Cancer (Contd.),” December 14, 1958)

On May 28, 1959, the *Jacksonville Journal* published a story entitled “10-Fold Cancer Rate Laid To Smoking,” which quoted Dr. E. Cuyler Hammond of the ACS’ statistical research department, claiming that “10 times as many cigarette smokers die from lung cancer as non-smokers.”

In addition to newspapers, there was coverage of smoking and health in the mass media. Among the most important of these periodicals was *Reader’s Digest*. The 1950s and 1960s were decades when the *Digest* was at the height of its popularity, with over 15 million subscribers by 1965, and an enormous additional “pass along” readership. From 1950 onward, *Reader’s Digest* accelerated its publication of articles illustrating the dangers of smoking. Among the most significant of these were “Are you a Man or a Smokestack?” (April, 1950; originally published in 1944); “Cancer by the Carton” (December, 1952); and “How to Stop Smoking” (April, 1954).

One *Reader’s Digest* article is especially noteworthy: “I Quit Smoking, or Cooper’s Last Stand.” Originally published in 1940, the article was published again in April, 1950, and for a final time in April, 1964. In the 1950 version of the article, there was an editorial reference to an earlier article, called “How Harmful are Cigarettes?” which had been published in January, 1950. The note says, “The article on this subject in the January *Digest* aroused more discussion and approval than any other recent magazine feature.” The final time “I Quit Smoking” was published by *Reader’s Digest* in April, 1964, there was another editorial note at the beginning of the article in which the editor of the *Digest* recounted its history of publicizing the dangers of cigarettes: “Since November 1924 the *Reader’s Digest* has published 36 articles on smoking and health. The American Cancer Society has termed them a profound influence in creating public awareness of the risks of smoking.”

Reader’s Digest published many articles bringing to the attention of its readers the latest findings from the scientific community about the health risks of smoking. In November, 1962, the *Digest* published “DANGER: Smoke at Your Own Risk.” Just below the headline was the condensed version of the message of the article: “Far more than lung cancer is involved. Recent studies show that more cigarette smokers die of heart disease associated with smoking than die of lung cancer. Many other diseases—from ulcers to pneumonia—are aggravated by cigarette smoke. The warning to smokers is this: STOP. If you must smoke, don’t inhale.” A decade later the *Digest* published a similar article, covering the medical knowledge about smoking that had more recently become available, “Do You Know What Happens When You Smoke? Recent research has given us a deeper understanding of how rugged cigarette country really is.” (July, 1972) A few years later, a *Reader’s Digest* article featured some remarks about the deadly effects of smoking by Dr. George Leonard, senior pathologist at the Ochsner Foundation Hospital in New Orleans: “Cigarettes—And Sudden Death.” (May, 1976) And later that same year, the

Digest published an article by Sydney S. Field, “Beware That Cigarette Cough—It may be the body’s final warning: Quit now, while you still have a chance.” (August, 1976)

Other Forms of Public Information

Other groups fostered knowledge about the dangers of cigarette smoking, especially non-governmental public health organizations like the American Cancer Society. The ACS also played a key role in making this new information about the health risks of smoking widely available to the public. One of the first ACS ventures into public education about smoking was the pamphlet, “To Smoke or Not to Smoke,” aimed at high school students. It was released as a pamphlet in 1958 and the ACS proudly claimed in its annual report that it had distributed a million and a half copies. The following year the pamphlet was released as a filmstrip with the same title.

Florida cities, and especially Miami and Jacksonville, were in the forefront of the anti-smoking movement. The Jacksonville public schools educated their students about the dangers of cigarettes. A talk to students at Stanton High School by the famous anti-smoking doctor, Alton Ochsner, made the news in a February 18, 1959, article in the *Florida Times-Union* entitled “Cancer Talk Today Opens School Drive.” On January 5, 1967, another article entitled “Nationwide Drive to Stop Smoking Is Launched Here,” announced that “a nationwide ‘stop smoking’ campaign to reduce the 250,000 deaths attributed to cigarette smoking in the United States annually, was kicked off in Jacksonville yesterday by five authorities in the lung cancer-cigarette smoking relationship, four of whom have dropped the smoking habit themselves.” Miami also sponsored early attempts to respond to the breaking scientific news. For example, it reported that “Officials from several major health agencies in Florida have formed a committee to develop an anti-smoking campaign for school children,” that will be focused on making this message a part of the school curriculum in Dade County and elsewhere. (“No Smoking Campaign for Children Set,” *Miami Herald*, January 12, 1964) Two years later, the *Miami Herald* announced a “five-day group therapy program” being held at Hialeah Hospital, the same program which boasted a high success rate at other venues with helping smokers to quit. (“Want To Quit Smoking?” November 26, 1966) And, in 1974, the *Miami Herald* once again ran an article about the various programs available around town to help persons who wished to stop smoking. (“Some People Need Help To Stop Smoking,” January 10, 1974)

Another important study was the 1962 Royal College of Physicians’ report. The RCP was asked by the British government to do an evaluative report, similar to the Seven Experts Study in 1957. A panel of experts was commissioned to look at all the studies that had been released up until that time dealing with the relationship between smoking and health. The RCP report came out in the spring of 1962; it concluded that there was a definitive causal relationship between cigarettes and lung cancer. The *New York Times*, on

March 8, 1962, covered it in a front-page story entitled, “War on Smoking Asked in Britain; Royal College of Physicians Links Cancer of Lung to Heavy Cigarette Use.” In June 1962, the RCP report was covered in a *Reader’s Digest* article entitled “Lung Cancer and Cigarettes:”

Out of London last March came a chill blast which sobered cigarette smokers and jolted the tobacco industry on both sides of the Atlantic. The venerable 444-year-old Royal College of Physicians, which never deals in trivia or sensationalism completed an exhaustive study and published a fact-filled report, ‘Smoking and Health,’ intended to give to doctors and others evidence on the hazards of smoking so that they may decide what should be done. The Royal College of Physicians stated unequivocally cigarette smoking is a cause of lung cancer and bronchitis.

The *Reader’s Digest* article noted the reception given to the RCP report:

“Tobacco industry spokesmen issued the standard rejoinder that the evidence was merely

‘old data without new research findings,’ but the statement sounded weaker and more pathetic

than ever.” In addition, the article quoted Sir Robert Platt, president of the Royal College of

Physicians, who stated: “‘Naturally every possible opposition has been raised to the idea that

these diseases are due to cigarette smoking. But not one of the opposing theories will hold water,

whereas everything confirms the evidence against cigarettes.’” Over the years, as scientific reports piled up, assertions by the tobacco industry that the causal relationship between smoking and lung cancer was unproven had less and less credibility. Fewer smoking and health stories included a tobacco industry comment, and those statements that made it into the popular press were occasionally treated with skepticism or even ridicule.

These responses were typical of the unchanging position of the tobacco industry and its spokespersons to the gathering evidence linking cigarette smoking to lung cancer and eventually to other diseases. Beginning in 1954, industry spokesmen took the position that the causal relationship between smoking and disease had not been proven, and that more research was necessary. Although this position had a degree of credibility in 1954, by 1962 it had lost it; the tobacco industry’s denials were met by increasing skepticism in the press and other media.

The Surgeon General's Report of 1964

The RCP study, although done in England, turned out to have a profound effect on America's investigation of the relationship between cigarette smoking and disease. During a news conference in May, 1962, President Kennedy was asked about the recent release of the Royal College of Physicians' Report on Smoking and Health. He was specifically asked whether he thought America should have one, to which he responded positively. Shortly thereafter the President directed Surgeon General Luther Terry to appoint a committee of distinguished scientists to review and evaluate all of the reports that had accumulated on smoking and health. Dr. Terry did so and, in the summer of 1962, the ten-person committee began its work. Less than two years later, at the beginning of January, 1964, the committee was ready to issue its final report.

The Surgeon General's Report on Smoking and Health was released on Saturday, January 11, 1964, a day that would insure maximum coverage by the newspapers and television networks. In the year 2000, the *New York Times*, looking back over the previous century of journalism, called the publication of Smoking and Health one of the 100 most important news stories of the century. All three of the television networks—CBS, ABC, and NBC—broadcast “extras,” or what we would call “specials,” on the Report that evening. Given that there were only three TV networks at that time, if you had a television that was on anywhere in America that night, you probably watched a show about the Surgeon General's Report. For example, it was covered by Harry Reasoner on CBS, who opened the show by summarizing the Committee's findings, “Cigarette smoking is the major cause of lung cancer in men, and data on women smokers points the same way. Cigarette smoking is a significant cause of cancer of the larynx, and probably the most important cause of chronic bronchitis. Cigarette smoking may be related to other lung diseases. . . .In short, the Committee says, ‘if you smoke cigarettes, you increase your chances of dying early.’” On the NBC “Extra,” commentator Frank McGee of course noted the Report's main finding. “Its key points are these. Item: Cigarette smoking is causally related to lung cancer in Men in comparison to nonsmokers. Average male smokers of cigarettes have approximately a nine- to ten-fold risk of developing lung cancer, and heavy smokers at least a twenty-fold risk.” But McGee also drew attention to the high mortality rate of smokers as a result of their increased likelihood of contracting heart disease and other cardio-vascular diseases: “High mortality of cigarette smokers is associated with many other cardiovascular diseases.”

The Surgeon General's Report was headline news on the front pages of nearly all of the Sunday newspapers published throughout the entire country and in Florida. On January 12, 1964, the *New York Times* trumpeted the headline, “Cigarettes Peril Health, U.S. Report Concludes; ‘Remedial Action’ Urged.” The *NYT* covered the Report in many articles running to tens of pages in that issue alone. In Jacksonville, both newspapers covered the story extensively. The *Jacksonville Journal* broke the news in Duval County with its

Saturday, January 11, headline quotation from the Report: “Smoking: ‘Health Hazard Needs Remedy.’” The *Florida Times-Union* splashed the story across the front page of its Sunday edition on January 12 with the headline, “Cigarette Smoking Held Grave Hazard to Health in U.S.” Inside the front page there were more stories, including one about the ACS response to the Report, entitled “Action on Cigarette Peril Urged.” Another January 12 article in the *Florida Times-Union* focused on the American Medical Association and quoted Dr. Edward R. Annis, the President of the AMA: “‘while it is unrealistic to assume that the American people are suddenly going to quit smoking,’ nevertheless we ‘urge the American people to pay careful and thoughtful attention to the report and to the strong evidence linking smoking to cancer and other diseases.’” (“AMA Urges Research on Smoke Harm”) The *Jacksonville Journal* also featured sidebar stories on various aspects of the Report, its history and how it was being received.

This sort of extensive coverage was replicated in major daily newspapers throughout the state. All of the major Florida newspapers that were published on Sunday, January 12, featured a story about the Report, usually on the front page above the fold. The *Ft. Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel* featured it as the major story of the day, “Smoking Called ‘Grave’ Hazard.” The *Lakeland Ledger* placed the headline just beneath the newspaper’s masthead: “U.S. Says Cigarettes Cause Lung Cancer.” The *Gainesville Sun*, announced on its front page, “Smoking is Principal Lung Cancer Cause,” while the *Palm Beach Post-Times* headlined its story about the Report, “Smoking, Cancer Linked.” The *Tampa Tribune* reported soberly, “U.S. Says Cigarettes Cause Cancer,” while the *Orlando Sentinel* headlined, “Smoking Top Cause Of Lung Cancer.” The *Miami Herald*, blunt as usual, ran its story under the headline, “That’s It, Cigaretts Give Cancer.” The result was that anyone in Florida who read a major newspaper on Sunday, January 12, 1964, faced a startling, and much anticipated story about the Surgeon General’s Report stating that cigarettes caused lung cancer, and was likely the causative agent in emphysema, chronic bronchitis, and perhaps heart disease as well.

The 1964 Surgeon General’s Report was a story that, as newspapermen would say, “had legs.” The *Florida Times-Union* ran follow-up stories for months, as reporters found various angles to cover. The *Jacksonville Journal* followed up with a lead editorial, “Smoking: What Next?” on January 15, and a story, “Cancer Society Urges Cigarette Ad Warnings” on March 17. Another newspaper that continued coverage was the *Gainesville Sun*, which carried five separate stories on smoking on January 17, including one reporting, “Smoking Report Bolts To Top Of Best-Sellers,” which announced that the government published a first press run of 240,000 copies of the Report. The *Gainesville Sun* continued to cover related stories on January 23, when it published “The Evidence Against Smoking—Part I: Smoke Kills Test Mice,” and another story on the same day about armed forces’ physicians and their reaction to the Report: “Service Doctors Planning Attack On Smoking.”

Furthermore the story was reported prominently by weekly newsmagazines, like *Time*, *Life*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News and World Report*, and

of course, the important monthly, *Reader's Digest*. To illustrate, *Time* covered the report in its January 17, 1964, issue: "The conclusion was just about what everybody had expected. On the basis of prolonged study and evaluation, the 150,000-word report, declared the committee, makes the following judgment: Cigarette smoking is a health hazard of sufficient importance in the U.S. to warrant appropriate remedial action." The magazines sometimes carried editorial cartoons that depicted the message of the Report graphically. One was reproduced in *Time* on January 24, 1964. The stark message of the image showed skulls smoking cigarettes on top of a caption reading, "The American Way of Death." In short, the Surgeon General's Report of 1964 was the culmination of coverage of the smoking and health issue that had been building since 1950.

Continuing Publication of Articles on Health Risks of Smoking on Longevity and Other Diseases

In the years following the 1964 Surgeon General's Report, Florida newspapers continued to publish articles which confirmed and expanded the warnings that the Report contained. Considerations of time force me to bring this paper to a conclusion with a discussion of the Surgeon-General's Report of 1964. Suffice it to say that the scientific data coming out of the period 1950-1964 about the risks of cigarette smoking was deepened and broadened in the remaining decades of the 20th century. The health risks of smoking that were demonstrated in successive years included the dangers of second-hand smoke on non-smokers who were exposed to cigarette smoke in their homes or in their jobs. These findings were the basis of the rapid spread of smoking prohibitions in public spaces. Finally, new data began to show the causal relationship between smoking and other diseases, such as heart disease, COPD, and other forms of cancer. Cigarette smoking has continued to be legal throughout the United States. But the incidence of smoking among the general population has fallen dramatically. Certainly such factors as the increased taxes on cigarettes and the prohibition of smoking in most public places have contributed to this decline. But the basis of this decline is the publicizing of the health risks of smoking first in the scientific-medico press, and its rapid spread to the public media.