

The Thumbs Up! Thumbs Down! Annual Ten Year Report on Tobacco In the Movies: 1994-2003



Reducing Tobacco Use in Movies Is Critical to Reducing Tobacco Use Among Young People

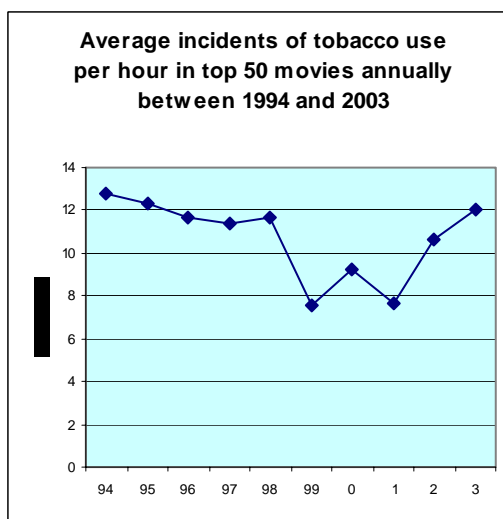
A longitudinal study carried out by a team of scientists at Dartmouth over the past 5 years suggests that up to 52% of the initiation of tobacco use among adolescents is directly attributable to tobacco use in movies.¹ These findings are supported by a review of over 1500 internal tobacco industry documents researched by the American Lung Association of Sacramento-Emigrant Trails that trace the history of tobacco industry efforts to influence Hollywood.² These documents clearly demonstrate that the tobacco industry considers smoking in films to be one of the most powerful influences there is in encouraging tobacco use.

By utilizing the Dartmouth findings, Dr. Stanton Glantz of the University of California at San Francisco School of Medicine has calculated that 1070 kids start smoking every day in the U.S. as a result of smoking in the movies.³ 535 of these kids will die prematurely of a smoking related disease. These numbers climb to 390,550 each year leading to an eventual 135,050 premature deaths. The popularity of American movies in other countries will likely multiply these figures several times.

Given this data, one of the most important steps that can be taken today to reduce the initiation of tobacco use among young people and the overall death and disease that results is to reduce tobacco use in movies.

Major Efforts Yield Minimum Results

Beginning in 1994 the American Lung Association of Sacramento-Emigrant Trails instituted the Thumbs Up! Thumbs Down project to analyze tobacco content in movies. Since then numerous state and national organizations have joined TUTD in urging the entertainment industry to reduce tobacco in movies. Efforts have included educational and media campaigns, several conferences held in conjunction with the entertainment industry and a Legislative Hearing sponsored by the California Legislature. While these activities appeared to have an initial impact, recent TUTD data shows that tobacco use in movies is climbing and suggests that new strategies for reducing use are necessary.



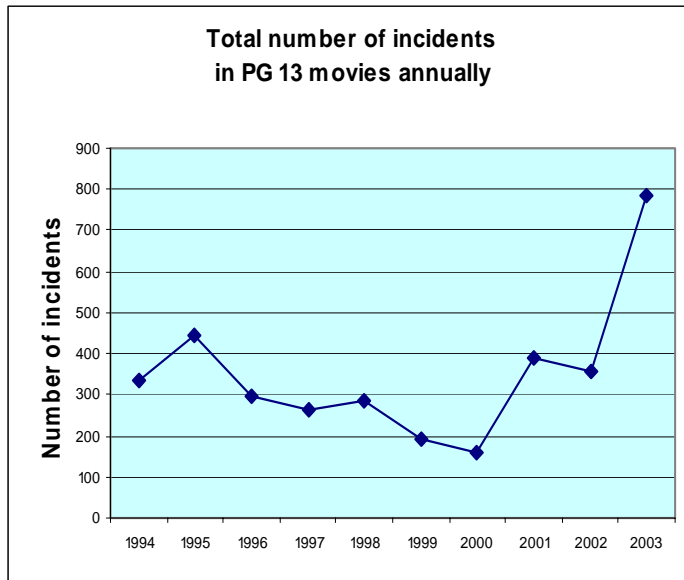
Major Findings

- Educational efforts aimed at reducing tobacco content in movies seem to have minimal impact. Use appears to be increasing.
- PG 13 movies provide greatest tobacco exposure to young people.
- Leading actors light up in 60% of the top box office movies.
- Youth reviewers report pro tobacco messages are included in 74% of movies that depict tobacco use.

Key Recommendations

- Eliminate tobacco from kid oriented G, PG and PG13 films.
- Encourage entertainment industry to reduce tobacco use in R rated films.
- Promote media literacy activities that inculcate young people against pro-smoking messages in movies and other entertainment productions.
- Eliminate tobacco industry influence on entertainment industry productions

PG 13 Movies Provide The Most Tobacco Exposure to Kids



The entertainment industry's move in 2000 to reduce the number of kids allowed to see R rated movies led studios to increase the number of PG 13 movies they were producing. While the average number of tobacco incidents per hour in PG 13 movies did not change significantly, the total number of PG 13 movies including tobacco and the total number of incidents in PG 13 movies increased substantially. The chart on the left reflects the dramatic increase in the total number of incidents in PG 13 movies included among the top 50 movies reviewed by TUTD annually. In comparison to the 786 incidents TUTD found in 2002-03 PG 13 movies, reviewers counted 1 incident in G rated movies, 4 in PG and 417 in R.

The Who's Who of Lighting Up on Screen

Star power sells movies. Casting popular actors in a movie almost guarantees increased movie attendance and higher box office returns. *Star power can also sell tobacco.* When leading actors light up on screen it sends a powerful message to young people that smoking is a highly desirable activity. As early as 1989 Philip Morris noted in a marketing plan "We believe that most of the strong, positive images for cigarettes and smoking are created by cinema and television. We have seen the heroes smoking in "Wall Street," "Crocodile Dundee," and "Roger Rabbit." Mickey Rourke, Mel Gibson and Goldie Hawn are forever seen, both on and off the screen, with a lighted cigarette."⁴ According to the scientific research being carried out at Dartmouth, "*Non smoking teens whose favorite stars frequently smoke on screen are sixteen times more likely to have a positive attitude toward smoking in the future.*"⁵

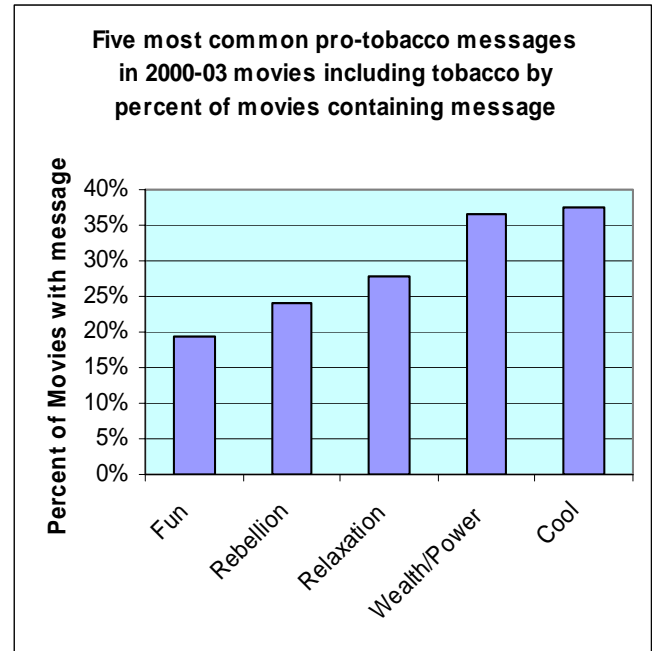
On the right is a partial list of stars who have lit up in movies over the past four years. In the 2003-03 year leading actors lit up in 60% of the top 50 domestic box office movies and 79% of the movies with tobacco. A 2003 review of TUTD data by UCLA noted that there was more tobacco use in movies where stars light up as opposed to minor characters smoking. This creates a double impact on young viewers where use by stars is reinforced by the impression that tobacco use is more prevalent in our society than it actually is.

Stars Who Smoked in Recent Movies

Drew Barrymore	Nicole Kidman
Pierce Brosnan	Diane Lane
Nicolas Cage	Matthew McConaughey
Jim Carrey	Eddie Murphy
Jennifer Coolidge	Bill Murray
Russell Crowe	Gwyneth Paltrow
Penelope Cruz	Brad Pitt
Matt Damon	Julia Roberts
Johnny Depp	Adam Sandler
Danny DeVito	Will Smith
Leonardo DiCaprio	Mena Suvari
Mel Gibson	Charlize Theron
Heather Graham	John Travolta
Hugh Grant	Mark Wahlberg
Gene Hackman	Denzel Washington
Jennifer Love Hewitt	Bruce Willis
Hugh Jackman	Owen Wilson
Samuel L Jackson	Renée Zellweger
Ashley Judd	Catherine Zeta-Jones

Leading Message from Tobacco Use in Movies: It's Cool

One of the reasons filmmakers include tobacco in movies is because it serves as an effective prop that can relay information about the actor. For example, an adult male actor smoking a cigar is seen as having power; a teenage girl actor lighting up a cigarette is seen as being rebellious. Each year TUTD youth reviewers are asked to provide their perspective on tobacco messages included in movies. Between 2000 and 2003, reviewers reported that 74% of the 104 movies they reviewed with tobacco contained pro-tobacco messages. The top five are reflected in the chart on the right. These messages are the same messages the tobacco industry incorporates into its advertising campaigns and provide a powerful inducement for kids to take up smoking.



New Strategies Called for...

While continuing to work with and educate the entertainment industry on the public health aspects of tobacco use in the movies is important, the seriousness of the issue combined with the limited effectiveness of educational efforts suggests new strategies are called for. The TUTD Project recommends the following:

- Eliminate tobacco from kid oriented films:** Modify the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) Guidelines to eliminate tobacco use depiction from all newly produced G, PG and PG 13 movies, unless the presentation of tobacco clearly and unambiguously reflects the dangers and consequences of tobacco use or represents accurately the smoking behavior of an actual (as opposed to fictional) historical figure.
- Reduce tobacco in R rated films:** Encourage the entertainment industry to reduce and/or eliminate tobacco use depiction in R rated movies and other entertainment productions through education and through the denormalization of tobacco use within the industry.
- Counter pro-tobacco messages:** Promote media literacy activities that inoculate young people against pro tobacco messages that appear in movies including placing in-theater and on-video anti-tobacco messages before movies that include tobacco use.
- Zero out tobacco industry influence:** Eliminate tobacco industry influence on the entertainment industry productions through aggressive enforcement of the Master Settlement Agreement, the adoption of studio based policies, and the inclusion of a statement at the end of the movie declaring that nobody involved in the production received anything of value from anyone in exchange for using or displaying tobacco.

The World Health Organization, American Medical Association and American Academy of Pediatricians have all adopted policies similar to the above recommendations.

The most effective step listed above is to modify the MPAA ratings to include tobacco. According to MPAA, the rating system "is a voluntary system sponsored by MPAA and theater owners to provide parents with advance information on films." Since MPAA represents the entertainment industry and the rating system is voluntary, censorship is not an issue. It is the entertainment industry establishing internal standards that reflect the broader interests of the general public. Freedom of speech and children can both be protected while eliminating tobacco from kid oriented films.

The American Lung Association of Sacramento-Emigrant Trails

909 12 Street,
Sacramento, CA
(916) 444-5864
Email: saclung.org

Jane Hagedorn, Executive Director
Kori Titus, Project Director
Shelley Mitchell, Project Coordinator
Curt Mekemson, Primary Consultant

Coming this Spring...

“Hollywood Speaks Out on Tobacco”

A book written by Curt Mekemson, TUTD’s primary consultant, and published by the American Lung Association of Sacramento-Emigrant Trails that utilizes quotes from and about celebrity smokers to counter the glamorization that takes place when stars portray tobacco use on the screen with the reality of tobacco use in their own lives.

Sample Quotes:

“I stopped smoking the day I knew I was pregnant. Ethan and I both stopped on that day. It’s like you’re just one puff away from your entire family being invaded by an evil addiction.”

Uma Thurman Elle Magazine, Nov. '99

“I won’t smoke upstairs, near the kids’ bedroom. Besides, I don’t want to stink up my clothes or the bedroom.” **Arnold Schwarzenegger** cigaraficionado.com

“I’m trying really hard to stop. I think it’s pretty hard to stop if you are a smoker. I’ve had friends who have kicked really terrible things such as heroin, and they always say giving up cigarettes is physically harder.”

Elizabeth Hurley Fashionavenue.com

The Thumbs Up! Thumbs Down! Project

Thumbs Up Thumbs Down was created in 1994 by the American Lung Association of Sacramento-Emigrant Trails to analyze movies and other entertainment industry productions for tobacco content, work with and educate the entertainment industry on the issue and raise public awareness. Each year it recruits and trains teenagers to analyze the top 50 domestic box office movies starting on May 1 and ending the following April 30. Each movie is reviewed a minimum of three times for the amount and type of tobacco being used, who is using it, where it is used, brand use, and perceived messages resulting from use. In instances where reviewers differ substantially, a fourth review is carried out by project staff. Data is then analyzed and released to the entertainment industry and general public.

Since 1994 TUTD has developed a database on over 600 movies and worked with public health organizations and educational institutions as well as the entertainment industry on a state, national and international level to reduce tobacco content in movies. This past year, its methodology was adopted by the World Health Organization and India to analyze movies made in India for tobacco content. The project is funded by a California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section, Proposition 99 Grant # 0090377.

For Further Information

Thumbs Up! Thumbs Down! and Scene Smoking: (<http://www.saclung.org/>) and (<http://www.scenesmoking.org>) These two web sites of the American Lung Association of Sacramento-Emigrant Trails provide a comprehensive look at tobacco use in movies. The TUTD site provides summarized data on tobacco use in the top 50 domestic box office movies annually beginning in 1991. Scene Smoking provides current data by rating the top ten movies weekly. Both sites provide background information, recommendations for action and ways to become involved.

Smoke Free Movies: (<http://smokefreemovies.ucsf.edu>) Smoke Free Movies is a comprehensive site of the University of California at San Francisco which provides detailed background information on smoking in the movies, its impact on the initiation of tobacco use among teenagers and the tobacco industry’s efforts to encourage tobacco use in movies.

Sources

1. Dalton, MA, Sargent, JD et al. Effect of viewing smoking in movies on adolescent smoking initiation, A cohort study. The Lancet 362(9380): 281-285
2. Mekemson CV, Glantz SA. How the tobacco industry built its relationship with Hollywood, Tobacco Control 2002; 11:0-10
3. Phillip Morris Cigarette Marketing, Kelly Weedon Shute Advertising, pmdocs.com/getallimg.asp?DOCID=2501057693/7719
4. Glantz SA. Smoking in movies, a major problem, published on line June 10, 2003, thelancet.com/extras/03cmt159web.pdf
5. Tickle, Sargent, Dalton, Beach and Hea therton (Favorite movie stars, their tobacco use in contemporary movies and its association with adolescent smoking. Tobacco Control, 2001:10:16-22