

need to know whether the difference encapsulates a population or you can do it one by one.

Q: Not many people have had their lives portrayed by Hollywood. Has that helped you in your work?

A: I think the movie enhanced my public persona, yes. Would I be here today if it wasn't for the movie? Probably not.

Q: How is Smoke-Free Kids funded?

A: By me giving talks and presentations for which I'm paid. I don't want any other donors. I do what I want to do because I want to do it.

Q: Tell us a bit more about your work with governments. How do you promote the anti-smoking message to policy-makers?

A: I would say they invariably seek me out. I presume that's because I have a public persona. They ask 'what would you do if you were me?' That's how I started with Allan Rock, who was Canada's minister of health from 1997 to 2002. We developed a programme in which we changed the packaging and pricing and introduced smoke-free environments.

I've been to Norway, Malta, Iceland. There's not too many places that I haven't been.

Q: Which factors ensure that people don't start smoking?

A: There's no foolproof way. Everybody's autonomous – they have their own free will. I have no domain or control over that. That's the purpose of education. Education provides people with cognitive capacity to make good decisions.

Q: Which government policies work when it comes to stopping children smoking?

A: I think government policies provide the environment for people to make better decisions, I don't think government tells anybody what to do and how to do it. What government does is provide the environment for people to behave in a certain way. In the case of price increases, people say: 'If I can't afford it, I won't smoke.'

Q: Which governments are doing a good job in the fight against smoking?

A: The Canadian government has distinguished itself and the Australian

government has distinguished itself, with measures such as smoke-free environments, changes to packaging and counter advertising. They're all part of changing the environment in which smoking has been endemic.

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Q: Is public health winning the battle against tobacco? Has the tobacco industry changed?

A: No, I don't think the leopard has changed its spots. It's just becoming much more sophisticated in developing and delivering nicotine products, whether they're dissolvable, cherry-flavoured cigarettes, or whatever. They continue to use their tentacles in government circles to protect the industry. I don't think that's changed dramatically yet. I think it will change, because public health concerns over disease and death are becoming much more influential. It costs governments more money, more businesses lose productivity; ultimately they say 'this thing is no good for us'. What's happening is we're having a 'denormalization' of a two centuries-old product: it's not part of everyday life. It's evolutionary: we're undoing two centuries in a decade.

Q: Why do you want governments to take additives out of cigarettes?

A: Because it would make tobacco taste disgusting. If I put something in my mouth that tastes disgusting, then I'm not going to use it.

Q: Tell us about your involvement with litigation.

A: I appear on behalf of a plaintiff who has been harmed, or for a government who is seeking to recover the cost of health care [from smoking-related diseases]. I act as an expert witness. That's what we're doing in Canada, that's

what we did in the United States, there was a case in Japan too. The most success so far has been in the US and now in Canada.

Q: How strongly are lawyers involved with the tobacco industry compared to the other industries you've worked in?

A: Lawyers are part of the tobacco industry both internally and externally and they are intimately involved at all phases of operations. I don't think that's true of the pharmaceutical industry.

Q: Are there any measures that governments have taken that you feel don't work?

A: I'm not that comfortable with the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, which was passed in 2009, which basically gave the US Food and Drug Administration regulatory power over the cigarette industry. My problem was that the industry directly participated in crafting the law. So they exempted menthol, and two weeks after the law was passed Philip Morris introduced menthol cigarettes. It had no teeth. They should have eliminated menthol as an additive, not as a cigarette.

The tobacco industry was sued in the Netherlands in 2005, it had to disclose all the additives, then the political environment changed and the result of that was that none of the additives has been disclosed. ■

Corrigendum

In Volume 90, Number 8, August 2012, on pages 564 and 565 the abbreviation for the Foundation for Genomics and Population Health should have been "PHG Foundation".