



World No Tobacco Day 2020 – Protecting Our Youth from Industry Influence

25 May 2020

World No Tobacco Day (WNTD) is celebrated on 31st May every year is an international day designated by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to advocate for effective policy aimed at reducing the global use of tobacco and tobacco-related products.

WHO selects a theme for the day in order to create a more unified message. The 2020 theme for WNTD, is: **“Protecting Youth from Industry Manipulation and Preventing them from tobacco smoking, nicotine use and use of other electronic devices”**. There is increasing evidence that youth and young adults are an increasing segment of the tobacco using population.

The World No Tobacco Day 2020 Global campaign serves to expose manipulation tactics employed by the tobacco and related industries, and to equip young people with knowledge about tobacco and related industries’ intention to hook the current and future generations on tobacco and addictive nicotine products. The focus will also be to empower influences in pop culture, on social media and in the home or in the classroom to protect and defend youth and catalyse change by engaging them in the fight against the tobacco industry.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa (HSFSA) has a specific focus this year for WNTD on protecting the cardiovascular health of young individuals to prevent the onset of heart disease and strokes prematurely. Smoking tobacco and other electronic devices (EDs) belong in the list of key drivers for poor health outcomes. We know that for decades the tobacco industry employed strategic and aggressive and well-resourced tactics to attract youth to tobacco and nicotine products. In response to the tobacco and related industries systematic and sustained tactics to attract a new generation of tobacco users, WNTD will provide counter-marketing campaigns and empower young people to engage in the fight against the tobacco industries.

As a way to mobilize our efforts, the HSFSA in collaboration with like-minded partners, namely, the National Council Against Smoking (NCAS), CANSA, the South African Medical Research Council, CTFK, SANCDs Alliance and the HSRC, will be highlighting this important day to draw attention to the widespread prevalence of tobacco use and the negative health effects. We will continue to lobby for

the Control of Tobacco and Electronic Delivery Systems Bill which will strengthen control and make public areas 100% smoke-free.

The COVID-19 pandemic has complicated health outcomes for individuals already at risk. Thus far it has been found that COVID-19 positive individuals who smoke do not have good health outcomes. Young people are finding it difficult to cope with the restrictions of movement and certain freedoms due to the pandemic and may engage in unhealthy behaviours, such as smoking or vaping despite the tobacco ban at during level 4. We urge young people not to smoke, vape, or consume excessive alcohol and other drugs to deal with their negative emotions.

According to the World Health Organisation, smoking and vaping may increase the risk of a severe coronavirus infection and cautions for heart and stroke patients who may face higher complications from COVID-19. As a high-risk population, smokers should avoid places where they may be exposed to COVID-19 and avoid sharing cigarettes or sharing puffs.

Exposure to second-hand smoke (passive smoking), is associated with numerous adverse health effects, even in children and unborn babies and causes substantial mortality and morbidity globally. Although, second-hand smoke usually comes from smoking cigarettes, smoking other tobacco products like water-pipes is common and can substantially contribute to second-hand smoke exposure. Electronic devices are also not safe, despite claims that they are smokeless. There is no safe level of smoking or a safe cigarette, even those labelled mild and low nicotine.

How are the Tobacco and related industries manipulating youth?

- Use of flavours that are attractive to youth in tobacco and nicotine products, like cherry, bubble gum and cotton candy, which encourages young people to underestimate the related health risks and start using them.
- Sleek designs and attractive products, which can also be easy to carry and are deceptive, e.g., products shaped like a USB stick or candy.
- Promotion of products as “reduced harm” or “cleaner alternatives” to conventional cigarettes in the absence of objective science substantiating these claims.
- Celebrity or influencer sponsorship and brand-sponsored contests to promote tobacco and nicotine products, e.g. Instagram influencers.
- Point of sale marketing at vendor outlets frequented by children – including positioning near sweets, snacks or soda and providing premiums for vendors to ensure their products are displayed near venues frequented by young people.
- Sale of single stick cigarettes and other tobacco and nicotine near schools which makes it cheap and easy for school children to access tobacco and nicotine products.
- Indirect marketing of tobacco products in movies, TV shows, and online streaming shows.
- Tobacco vending machines at venues frequented by young people and undermining regulations on sales to minors.
- Litigation to weaken all kinds of tobacco control regulations, including warning labels, display at the point of sale and advertising tobacco products.

This WNTD we call on the tobacco control community to build resilience among the next generation of young people against tobacco and break free from the tobacco and related industries’ manipulation. The implementation of comprehensive Tobacco Control policies by government can help prevent industry evasion of Tobacco Control legislation. Our communities are an important

group of Tobacco Control stakeholders and should be utilised to garner support for Tobacco Control policies in the context of the recent growth in youth tobacco and e-cigs use. The HSFSA, together with other NGO's, will be carrying out awareness activities and education campaigns with the aim of mobilising communities to empower young people to take control of their health and to move steadily towards a tobacco-free generation.

Ends

Interviews will be conducted with our CEO, Prof Pamela Naidoo, our dietitians, nutritionist, health promoters, and relevant experts. To co-ordinate and confirm interview dates you are welcome to contact the Public Relations and Communications Department on 021 422 1586 or

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About the Heart and Stroke Foundation SA

The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa (HSFSA) plays a leading role in the fight against preventable heart disease and stroke, with the aim of seeing fewer people in South Africa suffer premature deaths and disabilities. The HSFSA, established in 1980 is a non-governmental, non-profit organization which relies on external funding to sustain the work it carries out.

The HSFSA aims to reduce the cardiovascular disease (CVD) burden in South Africa and ultimately on the health care system of South Africa. Our mission is to empower people in South Africa to adopt healthy lifestyles, make healthy choices easier, seek appropriate care and encourage prevention.

For more information visit www.heartfoundation.co.za. You can also find us on www.facebook.com/HeartStrokeSA and www.twitter.com/SAHeartStroke

