Joel's Reinforcement Library

"If Cigarettes Were as Deadly as You Claim They Are, The Government Would Not Sell Them!"

Whenever I do my first day slide presentation, members of the audience often openly express this sentiment. We explain how smoking causes heart disease, cancers, circulatory conditions, emphysema and many other deleterious conditions. We go on further to claim that cigarette smoking is the number one most preventable cause of death in the United States, causing an excess of 434,000 premature deaths yearly. This is more deaths than those caused by all accidents, infectious diseases including AIDS, murders, suicides, diabetes, atherosclerosis, kidney disease and liver disease combined. More Americans will die this year from cigarette smoking than all the Americans killed in 24 years of battle deaths from World War I, World War II, the Korean War and the Viet Nam War, combined!

These statistics are staggering. Many smokers assume that if cigarettes were this dangerous they would not be allowed legally on the market. Chemicals like cyclamates, red dyes and other carcinogens are pulled off the shelf. Cigarettes are sold, so they must be safer. People thus suspect that my figures must be greatly exaggerated.

In response to this skepticism, let me explain that these figures originate with the United States Surgeon General's Reports. Since 1964, these reports have been produced annually by the government's office of Health and Human Services. The reports review all studies and available information, not only from America but from all over the world. The general consensus for over 20 years of accumulated data is that cigarettes are killers.

Some people assume that the government is exaggerating how deadly cigarettes are. This is not very likely. If the government was going to mislead the public on the dangers of smoking, it would be denying the dangers, not exaggerating them.

The United States Government has had a strong vested interest in tobacco production and dissemination. In 1984 tax revenues generated from tobacco products exceeded 6 billion dollars annually. The government owned close to one billion dollars of surplus tobacco. Even with this strong vested interest, the report that year claimed that over 300,000 Americans died prematurely from cigarette smoking that previous year.

Before 1964, the U.S. Government did not issue much information about the dangers of smoking. Other developed countries without vested interests were warning their citizens of the inherent dangers of cigarettes. Today, the evidence is so conclusive that the government recognizes its obligation to report the facts. The United States government, medical associations, and the general world-wide medical community all agree that cigarettes are lethal.

Consider this information when confronted with what some ads call the smoking controversy. The only controversy is with the tobacco industries. They claim their product is harmless and offers great advantages to their customers who smoke it. This "harmless" product is everything but harmless. It is addictive. It is expensive. It is deadly. Consider all this and remember- NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!

Joel

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