

Correspondence

A Healthier Cigarette?

I am glad to report that there have been at least three promising developments in the quest for a safer cigarette. As I pointed out in my recent editorial on the topic,¹ “at least one company, Vector Tobacco Inc. is trying to capture the market consisting of smokers who cannot, or will not, give up their habit, but are afraid of its health consequences. As a result, Omni cigarettes² are now being promoted as “the first premium cigarette created to significantly reduce carcinogenic PAHs, nitrosamins, catechols, and organics, which are the major causes of lung cancer in smokers.³ Whether or not such cigarettes will reduce lung cancer incidence is unclear, since as the accompanying Surgeon General’s warning points out, “Reductions in carcinogens (PAHs, nitrosamins, catechols and organics) have NOT been proven to result in a safer cigarette.” This closing statement appears to be no longer true. On June 27, 2002, the Vector Group issued a press release describing how an independent research laboratory had treated the skins of 40 mice with smoke condensate of Omni cigarettes and those of a further 40 with the condensate of the leading US national brand.⁴ In these tests, 68% of the mice treated with normal cigarette smoke condensate developed skin tumours, compared to only 20% of the group exposed to the Omni condensate. These test results certainly suggest that Omni cigarettes maybe less carcinogenic than at least one major competitor’s brand. I have brought the value of selenium supplementation to Vector Tobacco Inc.’s attention and the company appears to be giving the trace element serious consideration.⁵

Beyond this, Thione International Inc. has developed an antioxidant complex, (a major component of which is glutathione) which is designed to reduce free radical damage. The company is currently working with four tobacco manufacturers to test cigarettes with filters containing this anti-

oxidant complex.⁶ In addition, Thione International Inc. is planning to market lozenge and spray forms of its antioxidant complex as “tobacco remediation” tools.

I also am glad to report that the recent safe cigarette editorial, published in the *Journal of Orthomolecular Medicine*, also has been translated into Chinese and will be reprinted in the *Chinese Journal of Environmental and Occupational Medicine*. No country requires safer tobacco more than China does. One out of every three cigarettes manufactured worldwide is smoked there. As a result, it is estimated that at least 50 million of the children now living in China will eventually die of smoking-related causes. This is hardly surprising since the Chinese Association on Smoking and Health’s goal for the year 2000 was to reduce the male adult smoking rate to below 58%⁷

—Harold D. Foster, PhD
Department of Geography
University of Victoria
PO Box 3050
Victoria, BC V8W 3P5

References

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