

EM9506: The Globe and Mail, March 31, 1995, pages A1, A8

# Tobacco, fatty beef targets of report

## Prevention key in fight against cancer

**BY JOAN BRECKENRIDGE  
and DAN WESTELL**  
The Globe and Mail

TORONTO – Ontario should invest in an ounce of prevention in the fight against cancer by launching an all-out attack against tobacco, fatty beef and other bad lifestyle choices, a government-appointed task force says.

Recommendations from the task force, dominated by doctors and health advocates, start with motherhood statements on the need to provide healthy school breakfasts and stop just short of banning tobacco.

"Prevention is the only long-term strategy that can eventually reduce the burden of cancer," task force chairman Dr. Anthony Miller said at a media conference yesterday at the University of Toronto.

Dr. Miller said the 63-page report, called *Recommendations for the Primary Prevention of Cancer*, shows "how we can create the social circumstances where it's easy to prevent cancer."

The report's 81 recommendations cover lifestyle as well as occupational and environmental concerns. The most controversial suggestions focus on two areas that account for about half of all cancer deaths: cigarettes (25 per cent) and diet (20 per cent).

On tobacco, the task force recommended that:

- A royal commission be set up to investigate industry practices;
- Taxes be increased;
- Industry sponsorships of sports and cultural events be banned;
- The industry be held responsible for the costs of tobacco-related illnesses, which

would include having the federal and provincial governments considering legal action against manufacturers;

- Tobacco be put under the Canadian Hazardous Products Act to allow for plain packaging and bigger warnings;
- An Ontario Tobacco Control Board be established to "licence or control access to tobacco products." The board would have the power to regulate promotions, control exports and investigate and control unethical practices.

The unethical practices targeted by the report include suppressing evidence that links tobacco smoking to disease, distributing misleading information about the consequences of using tobacco and encouraging children to light up.

"In spite of [industry] protestations to the contrary, a lot of the publicity in relation to tobacco is carefully directed at bringing new smokers in," said Dr. Miller, who is chairman of the department of Preventive Medicine and Biostatistics at the University of Toronto.

The main targets, he said, are children who are unable to appreciate the long-term consequences of developing a smoking habit.

Marie-Josée Lapointe, spokeswoman for the Canadian Tobacco Manufacturers Council, had not seen the report but said yesterday that the industry does not promote its products to children and backs efforts to stop retailers from selling cigarettes to children.

She said the report recommends measures similar to ones that already have failed, such as high taxes, and that attack producers rather than an individual's decision to smoke. The industry already pays more taxes than the health costs associated with smoking, she said.

Dr. Miller criticized tobacco-industry sponsorship of sporting events, calling it "a contradiction in terms. Sports should be healthy. Tobacco is lethal."

Ms. Lapointe defended the practice, saying that sports promotions pay for events that would otherwise not be held.

The task force recommended that there be better nutritional labelling and that differential tax levels be considered as a way to encourage healthy eating and discourage "consumption of high-fat food products." The task force also criticized marketing-board payments that encourage production of high-fat, high-risk foods.

The report roasted the beef industry for introducing a grading system where "the amount of fat will be greater in what the consumer will regard as the highest quality grades (AAA) compared to a lower quality grade (A)," where the fat content is lowest.

Dr. Miller said this rating system misleads people into believing that the beef with the highest amount of fat is of higher quality.

"Because we get used to fat, it may taste better, but you should not be giving the impression to the public that high-fat beef is good for you!"

"As far as health is concerned, it isn't good for you at all."

Kerry Wright, a dietitian with the Beef Information Centre, disagrees. She said yesterday that the new grading system gives people choices and that all of the cuts are lean. She said triple-A meat contains no more than 10 per cent fat.

She recommended that people eat triple-A beef, saying it is the highest quality.

The article EM9506 reprinted above is used in Figure 9.21 of the STAT 220 Course Materials and in Chapter 4 of the STAT 231 Course Materials.