Misinformation about smokeless tobacco

By ACSH Staff — April 20, 2010

In the wake of last week's U.S. House Subcommittee on Health hearing on smokeless tobacco, ACSH advisor and friend Dr. Brad Rodu has taken on one of the key witnesses. Dr. Rodu, an epidemiologist and oral pathology expert at the University of Kentucky, says in a post on his blog [1] that National Cancer Institute epidemiologist Deborah Winn "fueled the misinformation campaign about smokeless tobacco almost 30 years ago."

Winn published a study in 1981 that "irresponsibly led the public and the medical establishment to falsely believe that smokeless tobacco was responsible for an American oral cancer epidemic," Dr. Rodu writes. Winn's study on mortality rates only applied to users of powdered dry snuff, used by a tiny number of women in the South, and should never have been applied to chewing tobacco and moist snuff. Winn admitted as much at a "sparsely attended scientific meeting" in 1986, Dr. Rodu says, but tobacco prohibitionists still misapply her mortality claims to all smokeless products.

Dr. Rodu is the co-author of ACSH's landmark article on smokeless tobacco and harm reduction, Tobacco Harm Reduction: An Alternate Cessation Strategy for Inveterate Smokers [2]."

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