

# Still smokin after all these years: Something must be done

By ACSH Staff — January 10, 2014



In today's *NYTimes*, an [editorial calls our attention](#) <sup>[1]</sup> to the

progress made against tobacco over the half-century since the Surgeon-General's [Report on Smoking and Health](#), <sup>[2]</sup> was delivered January 11th, 1964. They correctly point out that the problem is far from solved, given the 44 million current smokers and 440,000 estimated smoking-related deaths in our nation each year (and add the informative statistic that another 8 million live here with cigarette-caused chronic disease).

The editors review briefly the [JAMA themed issue](#) <sup>[3]</sup> of this week ([covered by us here](#) <sup>[4]</sup>), highlighting all the anti-tobacco groups who so fervently wish and hope for a new national commitment to drive smoking rates down to less than 10 percent over the next decade, and wishing, ever so much, for some strategy to ultimately eliminate death and disease caused by tobacco.

And then they woke up. Well, not really: wishing won't make it so, and the tired, repetitive campaigns and websites and phone quit lines and patches and gums and drugs we now have won't make it happen, either. Innovative approaches to helping addicted smokers quit are needed. Moving away from trying to make better people, and instead trying to make people better, is what will work: giving up fundamentalism, requiring total abstinence from nicotine while figuring out how to deliver it in safe, or safer forms, may work.

What the *Times* and all those anti-tobacco groups will not tell us is that this method tobacco harm reduction has already worked: in Sweden and now Norway, snus-type smokeless tobacco has led to the lowest rates of tobacco-related disease in Europe. And e-cigarettes have been eagerly adopted by millions trying to quit, in Europe and here. Their success rates are not yet known, but will be within the next year or two unless the regulators and nannies at every level of government get in the way, as they almost did in Europe and may yet do here (as we nervously await the FDA's proposed rules). We've seen it in New York City, where e-cigarettes and vapers who love them have been consigned to the outdoors with smokers; and Los Angeles passed a bunch of less-stringent restrictions and will likely try again soon to tighten up these inane and counterproductive rules. Why? Your guess is as good as ours. While politicians and experts take aim at a non-

existent problem, the real problem smoking continues nearly unabated.

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[1] [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/10/opinion/fitful-progress-in-the-antismoking-wars.html?nl=todaysheadlines&emc=edit\\_th\\_20140110&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/10/opinion/fitful-progress-in-the-antismoking-wars.html?nl=todaysheadlines&emc=edit_th_20140110&_r=0)

[2] <http://profiles.nlm.nih.gov/NN/B/B/M/Q>

[3]

[http://jama.jamanetwork.com/issue.aspx?utm\\_source=Silverchair%20Information%20Systems&utm\\_medium=em](http://jama.jamanetwork.com/issue.aspx?utm_source=Silverchair%20Information%20Systems&utm_medium=em)

[4] <http://acsh.org/2014/01/weve-come-long-way-baby-theres-still-long-way-go-vs-cigarettes/>