

Another Inveterate Smoker Lost; This Has Got to Stop

By Gil Ross — February 19, 2016



Sad news from the "reality TV" front lines: *Mob Wives* star Angela Raiola, "Big Ang" to her large cult following, passed away, aged 55, from lung cancer which had spread to her brain. She also had a large throat cancer removed in April 2015, and had been undergoing chemotherapy recently for the lung cancer, but this did not stop its spread.

The VH1 show on which she came to "fame" premiered in July 2012 and is now about to launch its sixth season. The show revolves around the lives and interactions of several women "married to the mob." In Ang's case, she was a niece of a higher-up in the Genovese mafia family. (She also had a role on the VH1 series "Couples Therapy With Dr. Jenn" with her husband, Neil Murphy).

In a recent TV appearance merely days before her death, Ms. Raiola revealed that she had "stage 4 lung and brain cancer," and was also quoted as saying, "I was smoking for 40 years," and how difficult it was for her to break the habit, even when she was diagnosed with throat, and then lung cancer. "I think whoever smokes should quit," she added, "and if they didn't start, don't start."

She would have been a forceful spokesperson against smoking, had she lived. It's a shame she didn't advocate that policy long ago, she may well have helped some of her fans to avoid or give up the deadly and addictive behavior.

Of course, we here at ACSH have been pounding on that drum since our founding in 1978. One of our key, classic publications was an attempt to expose as many of the adverse health effects of smoking that most people, including smokers, are not aware of: "[Cigarettes: What The Warning Label](#) ^[1] Doesn't Tell You," first published in 1998, with several subsequent revisions.

This monograph has 19 chapters, each written by a medical specialist and each focuses on a specific topic, anatomical region or physiological mechanism that is affected by smoking. The book aims to counter the tobacco companies' mantra, "Well, everyone knows the dangers of smoking." No they don't, not by a long shot. This book remedies that deficiency.

We have published many, many articles, op-eds, letters, and broadsides addressing the most important public health issue, both in our nation, and around the world: the toll of cigarette smoking.

The U.S. [CDC estimates](#) ^[2] that almost 500,000 Americans die prematurely each year from smoking. We still harbor over 40 million adult smokers, although the number is gradually falling. We have been fervent advocates for more effective smoking cessation methods to help all those addicted smokers quit. Three-quarters of smokers say they want to quit, but a tragically small number of them are able to, perhaps one in 20. The FDA-approved methods fail 90 percent of the time, and the data are only now pouring in on the benefits of harm-reduction (as opposed to abstinence) products such as e-cigarettes and similar vapor devices.

For the billion lives predicted to be foreshortened this century by smoking, we have to hope that such products, or others, will be found soon to help smokers quit before they suffer the fate of Big Ang and hundreds of thousand of her fellow Americans.

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