



## Envisaging Plain Packaging of Tobacco Products: Appeal to National Policymakers

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### DEAR EDITOR,

Globally, tobacco has been acknowledged as the leading cause of social burden generated by human beings and accounts for the deaths of almost 50% of its users each year.<sup>[1]</sup> Although developing nations account for the four-fifths of the world's smokers, tobacco still remains the most common avoidable cause of morbidity and mortality even in developed nations.<sup>[1]</sup> However, despite the presence of so many associated hazards, the global tobacco industry remains influential, profitable, and determined enough to sell as much of the product as possible, especially in low- and middle-income nations.<sup>[1,2]</sup>

To respond to this global public health concern and reduce its adverse consequences, various interventions such as formulation of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control focusing on six important strategies; use of serious, antitobacco advertisements and graphic pack warnings to reduce the initiation or facilitate tobacco quitting; imposing bans on tobacco advertising and promotion; enforcing additional taxes on the tobacco products; and stopping the illicit trade in tobacco products have been tried over the years, and positive outcomes have been achieved.<sup>[1]</sup>

Nevertheless, in the global mission to reduce tobacco consumption and to continue the efforts of program managers, the stakeholders are now advocating for the plain packaging (viz., no use of logos, colors, brand images, or promotional messages on packaging but only brand and product names that too in a standardized color and font pattern) of tobacco products.<sup>[2,3]</sup> Plain packaging of tobacco products has been acknowledged as a crucial demand reduction intervention as it decreases the attraction, discourages the advertising and promotion, restricts misleading

labeling, and even augments the effectiveness of health warnings.<sup>[2,3]</sup>

Australia has pioneered the concept of plain packaging since the end of 2012, with the rationale that it decreases the appeal and deters young people and nonsmokers from starting its consumption or motivates smokers to quit and stay quit.<sup>[4]</sup> In fact, even the outcomes of this intervention have been encouraging, with definitive evidence of reduction in tobacco consumption across the nation, incidents of outdoor smoking or public display of packs, and initiation of a helpline to quit tobacco.<sup>[4]</sup> Realizing the benefits, nations such as Ireland, the United Kingdom, and France have also introduced laws to implement the same from May 2016.<sup>[3]</sup>

To conclude, plain packaging should be considered as an integral element of the holistic intersectoral approach toward tobacco control. Thus, it is the responsibility of policymakers and other stakeholders to take appropriate measures to ensure that their governments seriously consider the option of adoption of plain packaging.

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