The Surgeon General vs the Marlboro Man: Who Really Won?

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By Alan Blum, MD [1]

The images in this slide set are from an exhibition curated by Alan Blum, MD, at the University of Alabama Gorgas Library (November to December 2013) to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Surgeon General’s Report on Smoking and Health, released on January 11, 1964 by Dr. Luther Terry.
This favorite children’s toy (circa 1955–1965) dispensed Winston, Camel, and Lucky Strike branded candy cigarettes.
Play lighter and Philip Morris bubble gum cigarettes, circa 1960
The Doctor Kool penguin advises, “…TELL HIM TO SWITCH TO KOOLS and he’ll be all right” This advertisement for Brown & Williamson Tobacco Company’s KOOL cigarettes was published in *The Saturday Evening Post* (p. 97) on October 23, 1937. An excerpt reads: “Doctors… lawyers… merchants… chiefs in every walk of life agree that KOOLs are soothing to your throat.”
The Dr. Kool penguin, a promotional figurine given to physicians at medical conferences in the 1940s by Brown & Williamson Tobacco Company, maker of KOOL cigarettes.
“Smoke less...or change to Philip Morris...if smokers are affected by the irritant properties of cigarette smoke” — This cigarette advertisement, published in the October 16, 1948 issue of The Journal of the American Medical Association, claimed that “Many throat specialists suggest Philip Morris because they are convinced from published studies as well as their own observations that Philip Morris alone, of all the leading cigarettes, is by far the least irritating to the sensitive tissues of the nose and throat.”
The Tobacco Industry Research Committee, comprising the major cigarette manufacturers, took out this 1954 advertisement in newspapers throughout the US to dispute the growing scientific evidence that cigarette smoking caused lung cancer. The group promised to leave no stone unturned to find the real cause.
The KENT Micronite filter, advertised widely in 1955 with implied claims of reduced risk to health, was made of asbestos.
Roy Norr’s article in the December 1952 issue of Reader’s Digest, “Cancer by the Carton,” highlighting 30 years of research linking cigarette smoking with lung cancer, was originally published in the October 1952 issue of The Christian Herald.
An advertisement for this book in the May 18, 1955 issue of The New York Times promised “new, up-to-the-minute revelations about the smoking scares! new help...new reassurance for smokers!” It is likely that the author was hired by the tobacco industry to write the book, published in 1954 by E.P. Dutton.
“A Brief Review of the Smoking–Lung Cancer Theory,” by Clarence Cook Little, ScD, the Scientific Director of the Tobacco Industry Research Committee. This address, delivered before the Monroe County Cancer Association, Inc., in Rochester, New York, on April 28, 1960, claimed that proof of the harmfulness of cigarette smoking was still lacking.
Mayo Clinic cigarette case, circa 1960
The June 1963 cover story on smoking and lung cancer, in *Consumer Reports*, offered “a point-by-point review of the whole range of evidence.”
On January 11, 1964, US Surgeon General Dr. Luther Terry released his advisory committee’s 387-page report, *Smoking and Health*. The report detailed scientific evidence of the association between smoking and cancer and other life-threatening conditions such as heart disease.
Lead story on the front page of the *Chicago Tribune*, January 12, 1964, highlighting findings from US Surgeon General Dr. Luther Terry’s report. Smoking in men was associated with a 1,000% increased rate of death from lung cancer, as well as a higher incidence of chronic bronchitis, emphysema, and coronary artery disease, compared to non-smokers.
The lead news story in the trade journal *Tobacco*, February 14, 1964, reported that the six major US tobacco manufacturers (American, Brown & Williamson, Liggett and Myers, P. Lorillard, Philip Morris, and R.J. Reynolds) had offered the American Medical Association $10 million to study the effects of tobacco on health, and that the offer had been accepted with “no strings attached” by Dr. Raymond M. McKeon, President of AMA’s Education and Research Foundation.
FACTS ... Recent Research Reveals Unanswered Questions About Smoking and Health

This circa-1965 brochure was published by The Tobacco Institute, Inc., Washington, DC
Memorandum from George Lundberg, MD, editor of The Journal of the American Medical Association, to the editorial staff of JAMA, September 7, 1982

Dr. Lundberg states: “In a recent meeting, Dr. James Sammons and Mr. Thomas Hanson pointed out the existence of some particularly sensitive political questions and urged that we exercise appropriate caution on these subjects. They are: tobacco and control of tobacco use, nuclear war, abortion.”

Dr. Lundberg notes that, while “the cautions do not involve science...when the subjects wax political, we should be careful.”
“After a man’s heart…when smokers find out the good things Chesterfields give them... nothing else will do” — This cigarette advertisement ran on the back cover of the New York State Journal of Medicine on May 1, 1937, and in The Saturday Evening Post. It was also used on the front cover of the New York State Journal of Medicine special December 1983 issue, “The World Cigarette Pandemic” (vol. 83, no. 13).
“Why Is This Woman Selling Cigarettes?” — Cover Story The Washington Monthly September 1989
The cover caption reads: How Chris Evert, Sports Illustrated and network television help tobacco companies kill 1,000 people a day.
“If You’re Going to Enter, Make An Entrance”

“The Health Issue” / Marlboro advertisement — Swing Generation magazine, front and back cover, April 1998
A “Deck-o-Butts” trading card from 1990. This “Barfboro” parody of the Marlboro cigarette brand was created by Doctors Ought to Care (DOC). DOC, the first international physicians’ anti-smoking and health promotion organization, was founded by Dr. Alan Blum in 1977, and more than 100 chapters of DOC were established at medical schools across the US in the ensuing 25 years.
Direct mail promotion. Received by University of Alabama undergraduate student in October 2013.

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