

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Feel like a smoke? A cheeseburger?

Professor Suzan Burton and Dr Daniela Spanjaard of the School of Business, with Ms Lindie Clark and Dr Ross MacKenzie of Macquarie University and Dr Kristina Jackson from Brown University, USA are investigating the impact of distribution and in-store displays on the purchase and consumption of tobacco and 'fast-food'. The project is funded by the Cancer Council NSW.

'In NSW and other Australian states cigarettes are no longer openly displayed where they are sold', says Professor Burton. 'We know that this will remove an important prompt for people to smoke. However people attempting to quit and smokers are still confronted with lists of tobacco prices, and/or with a highly visible cupboard behind which cigarettes are stored. Do these displays, and the wide availability of tobacco, prompt people to smoke, particularly those who are trying to quit? There are also parallels between smoking and the increasing rate of obesity. We know that unhealthy foods are being marketed in ways that echo what the tobacco industry used to do, using wide distribution, seductive advertising, and heavy use of "point-of-sale" promotions. We think that displays of such foods might be prompting people to buy and eat high-kilojoule (usually "fast") foods, contributing to the high rate of obesity. Since smoking and obesity are two of the most significant and preventable health risks, it's crucial to look at ways to reduce both smoking and excessive consumption of high-kilojoule foods.'

Participants in the study will be a mix of people attempting to quit, smokers and people who are overweight and trying to lose weight. Participants will keep a digital diary, recording information about when and why they are tempted to smoke, buy cigarettes and/or eat high-kilojoule food. This data will form the basis for follow-up interviews examining triggers, motivations and influences on participant behaviour. Analysis of this data may



suggest more targeted advice to those attempting to quit smoking and/or lose weight.

Smoking and obesity are increasingly contributing to premature mortality and disease, costing the Australian community money and adversely affecting the lives of many people. If this research indicates that people are indeed affected by "point-of-sale" prompts, this can inform future policy decisions regarding promotion and sales of both tobacco and high-kilojoule food, limiting the high costs of smoking and obesity.

Project Title: An investigation of the impact of retail distribution on tobacco purchase and smoking, and on high-kilojoule food purchases.

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