



Contact: Betty Sax  
Phone: + 41 21 213 01 11  
Email: [Betty.Sax@firsnet.org](mailto:Betty.Sax@firsnet.org)

## **Global lung health forum calls for international support for plain packaging legislation**

**Cape Town, Glenview, Lausanne, Montevideo, New York, Paris, Tokyo, 31 May 2015.**

On World No Tobacco Day (31 May, 2015), the Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS) is mobilising its members to raise awareness of the health benefits of plain packaging for cigarettes.

World No Tobacco Day is observed worldwide today and provides an opportunity to draw attention to the tobacco epidemic and the preventable death and disease it causes.

Almost 6 million people in the world die from tobacco each year; 5 million people die of active smoking and more than 600,000 non-smokers die from exposure to passive smoke. A large proportion of these deaths are caused by respiratory diseases such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and lung cancer. 70% of smokers start before the age of 18 and 94% before the age of 25 years, when lung damage already begins.

Given this, children and young people must be prevented from picking up their first cigarettes. FIRS urges support for plain packaging legislation which forces tobacco companies to make every cigarette packet look the same except for the make and brand name, with graphic photos accompanied by health warnings.

The theme for the 2015 World No Tobacco Day is 'Stop illicit trade of tobacco products'. Tobacco companies argue that plain packaging would increase counterfeiting of cigarettes by making packs easier to copy. However, plain packaging measures would always be coupled with pictorial health warnings, and would be as difficult to counterfeit as packs with

brand logos. Illicit trade can also be counteracted through the use of chips and invisible ink on tobacco products. These are fully compatible with plain-packaging measures.

Research comparing existing branded cigarette packets with plain packaging found the latter to be significantly less attractive.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, research in which young adults used plain packaging confirmed that plain packs increased negative perceptions about smoking.<sup>2</sup>

Professor Jørgen Vestbo, President Elect of the European Respiratory Society, said: “We have seen the success of the introduction of plain packaging in Australia and now other countries in Europe are beginning to follow this lead. We believe the health of citizens is of the utmost importance and we now have evidence showing the public health benefits of the introduction of this legislation, particularly for children and young adults. ERS has consistently called for larger health warnings and standard packs to help prevent smoking and on World No Tobacco Day, we would encourage other countries across the world to support this important measure.”

### **World No Tobacco Day**

World No Tobacco Day is organised by the World Health Organization and takes place on 31st May every year. This year's theme is "The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control". The Convention is the world's foremost tobacco control instrument and this year's event will be designed to highlight the treaty's overall importance and to stress Parties' obligations under the treaty.

### **More information on the health hazards caused by smoking**

The SmokeHaz website was created by the European Respiratory Society with the aim of providing a central hub for the scientific evidence showing the health hazards of smoking. The website provides the latest data and statistics linking the disease with a range of respiratory conditions.

[www.smokehaz.org](http://www.smokehaz.org)

### **About FIRS**

The Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS) was established in 2002, with members coming from six international societies Asociacion Latinoamericana del Thorax (ALAT), the American College of Chest Physicians (ACCP), the American Thoracic Society (ATS), the Asian Pacific Society of

---

<sup>1</sup> Wakefield, M. A.; Germain, D.; Durkin, S. J. (2008). "[How does increasingly plainer cigarette packaging influence adult smokers' perceptions about brand image? An experimental study](#)". *Tobacco Control* **17** (6): 416–421. doi:10.1136/tc.2008.026732.

<sup>2</sup> Moodie, C.; MacKintosh, A. M.; Hastings, G.; Ford, A. (2011). "Young adult smokers' perceptions of plain packaging: A pilot naturalistic study". *Tobacco Control* **20** (5): 367–373. doi:10.1136/tc.2011.042911. PMID 21752795. [edit](#)

Respirology (APSR), the European Respiratory Society (ERS), the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union), and the Pan African Thoracic Society (PATS). The forum aims to promote advocacy in matters of global respiratory health and the identification of new areas for global initiatives.

[www.lungfirst.org](http://www.lungfirst.org)