



# chapter 1

## THE HISTORY OF TOBACCO AND ITS USE



### Key Messages

#### What does this Chapter tell us?

- Tobacco has been used worldwide for hundreds of years.
- The ill-effects of tobacco have been documented since the early 1600s.
- Governments worldwide have been trying to regulate tobacco use for centuries.

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*"But this same poyson, steeped India weede*

*In head, hart, lunges, do the soote  
and cobwebs breede*

*With that he gasp'd, and breath'd  
out such a smoke*

*That all the standers by were like to choke."*

1601 – Samuel Rowlands

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### Definition

The word nicotine comes from *Nicotiana*, the botanical name for the tobacco plant, named for Jean Nicot (c.1530 – 1600). He was the French ambassador to Portugal, who introduced tobacco to France by sending tobacco seeds as a gift to the French court in 1560.<sup>3</sup>

The tobacco plant is believed to have been used by American inhabitants as far back as 1 BCE (before the common era). Documentation about the effects of tobacco and efforts to reduce its use date back for centuries.

### **History of Tobacco Use, Health Effects of Tobacco, and Prevention Strategies**

- 600 – 1000 CE (common era): First pictorial record of smoking on a pottery vessel in Guatemala.<sup>4</sup>
- 1600s: Tobacco in use by First Nations in Canada (as introduced by trade with Europeans). First Nations peoples used tobacco as an offering to the spirits in exchange for their protection and continued harmony between the natural and the spirit world.<sup>5</sup>
- Early 1600s – 1735: French government in Canada restricts retail sale of tobacco in New France.<sup>5</sup>
- 1604: King James I of England writes “*A Counterblaste to Tobacco*”. In his treatise, the King noted that autopsies found smokers’ “inward parts” were “infected with an oily kind of soot.” James also said if he ever had the Devil to dinner, he’d offer him a pipe.<sup>4</sup>
- 1610: Sir Francis Bacon in England writes that tobacco use is increasing and that it is a custom hard to quit.<sup>4</sup>
- 1634: Czar Alexis of Russia creates penalties for smoking: The first offense is whipping, a slit nose, and transportation to Siberia. The second offense is execution.<sup>4</sup>
- 1719: Smoking is prohibited in France. Exceptions: the Franche-Comt, Flanders and Alsace.<sup>4</sup>
- 1791: London physician John Hill reports cases in which use of snuff caused nasal cancers.<sup>4</sup>
- 1800: In Canada, tobacco begins to be commercially grown in Southern Ontario.<sup>4</sup>
- 1830s: First organized anti-tobacco movement in United States begins as part of the temperance movement. Tobacco use is considered to dry out the mouth “creating a morbid or diseased thirst” that only liquor could quench.<sup>4</sup>
- 1856 – 1857: A running debate in England among readers about the health effects of tobacco runs in the British medical journal, *Lancet*. The argument runs as much along moral as medical lines, with little substantiation.<sup>4</sup>
- 1871: The Census records 1.2 million pounds of tobacco grown in Quebec, Canada.<sup>5</sup>
- 1908: In Canada, the Tobacco Restraint Act is passed, which bans sales of cigarettes to those under 16 years of age – never enforced.<sup>4</sup>
- 1930: The *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* decries health claims made by cigarette ads.<sup>4</sup>



- 1950: Richard Doll and A Bradford Hill publish their first report on Smoking and Carcinoma of the Lung in the British Medical Journal, finding that heavy smokers were fifty times as likely as non-smokers to contract lung cancer. The Cancer Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Health say they have demonstrated an association, not a cause, and advise the government to do nothing.<sup>4</sup>
- 1954: The Canadian Medical Association issues its first public warnings on the dangers of smoking.<sup>2</sup>
- 1963: Policy action to control tobacco is begun by the Canadian government.<sup>5</sup>
- 1967: First report concerning the adverse effects of environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) on children's health is published.<sup>6</sup>
- 1970s: Cigarettes are the most heavily advertised product in America.<sup>4</sup>
- 1972: Surgeon General's Report "*The Health Consequences of Smoking: A Report of the Surgeon General*" addresses "public exposure to air pollution from tobacco smoke" and danger of smoking to the unborn child.<sup>4</sup>
- 1977: First National Non-Smoking Week in Canada.<sup>4</sup>
- 1988: Canada passes legislation to restrict smoking in federally-regulated workplaces and prohibit tobacco advertising. The legislation also requires manufacturers to put health warnings on all cigarette packs.<sup>2</sup>
- 1993: Canada restricts the sale of tobacco to those 18 years of older and prohibits cigarette vending machines everywhere, except inside bars.<sup>2</sup>
- 1997: Canada bans tobacco sponsorships, restricts the size of cigarette packs and makes warning labels on packs bigger and stronger.<sup>2</sup>
- 2006: Ontario introduces the Smoke Free Ontario Act. Further amendments were made in 2008 and 2009.
- 2011: Ontario passes the Supporting Smoke-Free Ontario by Reducing Contaband Act.
- 2011: Canada introduces the Tobacco Products Labelling Regulations which stipulate requirements for the health-related labels displayed on cigarette and little cigar packages.



Source: Little Katie Chewing Tobacco, Emergency of Advertising in America On-Line Project – Ad #D0259, Tobacco Advertising collection, John W. Hartman Centre for Sales, Advertising and Marketing History, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University, <http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/ea/>