

State-Level Funding & Media Messages

An assessment of
SmokeLess States Dollars
and Newspaper
Coverage of Tobacco
Control

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Tracking the Media and Policy Impacts

of State-Level Tobacco Control:

The SmokeLess States Evaluation

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Presentation Objective

- To examine a large-scale evaluation of tobacco control efforts, specifically looking at the relationship between funding and newspaper coverage.

Media Advocacy – What do we already know?

Research tells us that there is a direct relationship between media advocacy news coverage.

Advocacy efforts can not only educate the public about health-related messages (in this case, tobacco control efforts), but can effect changes in laws, regulations, and institutional practices.

What don't we know?

We don't know as much about the indirect relationship between funding and coverage.
Three ways to measure funding:

1. Presence of funding (Yes or No)
2. Duration of funding (Number of Months)
3. Amount of funding (Dollars)

The SmokeLess States Initiative

- Co-sponsored by the American Medical Association and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- 2nd Wave of funding from 2001-2003, supporting the maintenance of statewide tobacco control coalitions to achieve three major policy initiatives:
 - Clean Indoor Air
 - Increased Tobacco Taxes
 - Medicaid Payment for Cessation

The Evaluation

- Seeking to examine the relationship among tobacco control coalition efforts, legislation, and newspaper coverage.
- Three-way approach:
 - Survey of tobacco control workers across the country
 - Legislative Tracking
 - Newspaper Component

Newspaper Data

- The media component uses newspaper articles collected from every daily newspaper in the country (N=1,447).
- Approx. 150,000 articles in total.
- Random 1/3 sample of days from January of 2002 through December of 2003.

Newspaper Data, continued

Goal was to capture manifest qualities through a coding system:

- What is the article about? (Content)
- Does the article express favorable attitudes toward tobacco control? (Tone)
- How is the article placed to capture the reader's attention? (Prominence)
- In what ways are tobacco-related stories being conveyed? (Type)

This analysis

- Looking at articles published in 2002 (n=19,898)
- Examining the relationship between funding and newspaper coverage
- Using cross-tabulations, chi-square statistics, and correlation coefficients.

Frequencies

- 89.6 percent of all articles that mention tobacco in any part of the article went on to feature tobacco in over half the piece.
- 18.1 percent of all articles contained mention of at least one tobacco company.
- 31.5 percent of all articles covered at least one SLS-focused policy.

Funding (Y/N) as a predictor

- States that were funded by SLS were *:
 - More likely to publish articles about SLS-related policies
 - More likely to print articles that espouse more favorable opinions about tobacco control.
 - More likely to be placed on the front page.
 - Less likely to give the tobacco industry a voice in their newspaper articles.

* $p \leq .01$

The More Funding, the Better : Even among funded states...

- More months of funding was significantly correlated with:
 - Fewer tobacco company mentions in articles
 - Fewer reports of lawsuits
- More dollars of funding was significantly correlated with:
 - More articles on the front page
 - Fewer tobacco company mentions in articles
 - Fewer reports of lawsuits

Conclusions

- The presence, duration, and amount of funding all have an impact on the content, tone, and prominence of coverage.
- We suggest that sustained, long-term funding for tobacco control media advocacy can create an environment whose ‘sum is greater than the whole of its parts’.