

Government Unveils Nationwide Anti-Smoking Campaign



This ad released by the CDC shows Shawn Wright who had a tracheotomy after being diagnosed with head and neck cancer. The

federal government has unveiled a nationwide anti-smoking campaign, with a series of ads that feature former smokers who discuss the negative health consequences of smoking.

The ads will appear on television and in newspapers starting March 19, 2012. The cost of the campaign is \$54 million this year. The New York Times reports that the tobacco industry generally spends at least that much on promotional efforts in two days.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which is spearheading the campaign, hopes it will save lives and money, according to CDC Director Dr. Thomas R. Frieden. "We estimate that this campaign will help about 50,000 smokers to quit smoking," he told the newspaper. "And that will translate not only into thousands who will not die from smoking but it will pay for itself in a few years in reduced health costs."

Studies have shown that graphic anti-smoking ads can be effective in convincing smokers to quit, the article notes. However, critics call them alarming and demeaning.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) wants to require tobacco companies to add graphic warning labels to cigarette packages by September 2012. The labels, which include pictures of diseased lungs and rotting teeth, are meant to inform the public of the dangers of smoking. Earlier this month, a federal judge blocked the FDA's label requirement. The Obama Administration has appealed the judge's decision.

One of the print ads features Shawn Wright from Washington State who had a tracheotomy after being diagnosed with head and neck cancer four years ago. The ad shows the 50-year-old shaving, his razor moving down toward a red gaping hole at the base of his neck that he uses to speak and breathe.

An advertising firm, Arnold Worldwide, found Wright and about a dozen others who developed cancer or other health problems after smoking for the ads.

Graphic ads are meant to create an image so striking that smokers and would-be smokers will think

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of it whenever they have an urge to buy a pack of cigarettes, said Glenn Leshner, a University of Missouri researcher who has studied the effectiveness of anti-smoking ads.

Leshner and his colleagues found that some ads are so disturbing that people reacted by turning away from the message rather than listening. So while spots can shock viewers into paying attention, they also have to encourage people that quitting is possible, he said.

The CDC campaign includes information on a national quit line and offers advice on how to kick the habit, CDC officials said.