

**Table 1** Intention to change behaviour before the cigarette excise tax increases in Germany (n = 1860 owing to 8 missing values)

Access to foreign cigarettes (cross-border shopping)	Intention to reduce smoking	Intention to quit smoking	Intention to switch to cheaper brand	No intention for behaviour change	Σ
No	512 (31.43%)	187 (11.48%)	260 (15.96%)	670 (41.13%)	1629 (87.58%)
Yes	54 (23.38%)	13 (5.63%)	38 (16.45%)	126 (54.55%)	231 (12.42%)
Σ	566 (30.43%)	200 (10.75%)	298 (16.02%)	796 (42.80%)	1860 (100%)
χ <sup>2</sup> (df = 1)	5.98, p<0.05	7.11, p<0.01	0.05, NS	15.35, p<0.001	

In all, 231 (12.37%) smokers reported cross-border shopping of cigarettes. They did not differ significantly from smokers with no cross-border shopping by sex, age, education, employment status, family status, household size, income or the average number of cigarettes smoked daily (ie, nicotine dependence).<sup>5-7</sup> They were more likely to live in a German Bundesland (State) near countries with cheaper cigarettes—that is, Luxemburg, Poland and the Czech Republic (χ<sup>2</sup> (15) = 145.67; p<0.001). Significantly fewer cross-border shoppers reflected on their smoking behaviour because of the upcoming tax increase: 79 (34.20%) with access to foreign cigarettes versus 771 (47.10%) with no access (χ<sup>2</sup> (1) = 13.58; p<0.001). Smokers with access to cross-border shopping differed significantly in their intention to change behaviour before the cigarette excise tax increases (χ<sup>2</sup> (3) = 19.29; p<0.001). Significantly fewer smokers with access to foreign cigarettes intended to reduce or quit smoking and significantly more did not intend to change their smoking behaviour (table 1). There was almost no difference for the intention to switch to a cheaper brand.

As intentions are an important predictor for behaviour change, we may assume that access to cheaper cigarettes across the border also decreases the effect of tobacco tax increases on cessation and reduced consumption. Effective tobacco control measures to reduce the availability of different ways of evading price increases, such as cross-border shopping, are urgently needed to realise the full potential effect of tobacco tax increases.

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**Press-released papers are more downloaded and cited**

Website hits and particularly pdf downloads provide direct evidence of readers' interest in papers published in journals. *Tobacco Control's* website has allowed examination of web hits and downloads each month and cumulatively since March 1998 (issue 7-1).

In March 2006, we examined website data and citations shown on the Institute for Scientific Information's Web of Science for all 553 original articles, reviews, editorials and special communications published in *Tobacco Control* and its peer-reviewed supplements from issue 7-1 till issue 13-2, comparing press-released and non-released articles. Articles published subsequent to 13-2 (June 2004) were not examined because publication lag times would have meant there would have been few citations to papers published after that time.

Press releases were issued to over 1000 media outlets around the world by the *BMJ's* press office for 47 original articles published during the study period (table 1).

Press-released papers received 2.3 times more web hits than non-press-released papers (p<0.001), 2.5 times as many pdf downloads (p<0.001), and were 2.1 times more likely to

be cited (p<0.001). Eleven papers (23.4% of those press released) which received more than 20 citations (range 21–90) in the sample period accounted for 58.6% of all citations for press-released papers.

Papers are selected for press release because of their anticipated newsworthiness. Newsworthiness is a subjective quality that reflects staff and editor's judgements about the likely interest that journalists will have in a paper's findings. It is not a judgement that is necessarily governed by the "importance" of a paper to the research community. When this judgement is accurate and a press release stimulates widespread news coverage, literally hundreds of millions of people globally may be exposed to the story, some of whom will have personal or professional interests in wanting to then locate and read the research article. A recent paper by SC on the effect of Kylie Minogue's breast cancer diagnosis on mammography screening<sup>1</sup> received coverage in over 950 news outlets, including the Chinese *People's Daily* and *Pravda*.

This study design does not allow anything more than speculation about whether it is a paper's contents or the fact it has been press released which is responsible for the more than doubling of web visits, downloads and subsequent citations. However, Phillips *et al* showed that research articles published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* which were reported in the *New York Times* received 72.8% higher citations in their first year after publication than articles not reported in the newspaper. Their study included a 3-month period during which the *New York Times* was on strike but still produced an undistributed "edition of record". Articles covered by the newspaper in that 3-month period were no more likely to be cited than articles not reported by the newspaper.<sup>2</sup>

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**Table 1** Press releases issued by the *BMJ's* press office to over 1000 media outlets around the world

	Mean website hits	Mean pdf downloads	Mean citations
Press released (n = 47)	7430	969	13.98
Non-press released (n = 506)	3227	393	6.676
Total (n = 553)	3584	442	7.297