

Health Consequences of Using Smokeless Tobacco: Summary of the Advisory Committee's Report to the Surgeon General

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Synopsis

On March 25, 1986, the Surgeon General of the Public Health Service released a report that detailed the results of the first comprehensive, indepth review of the relationship between smokeless tobacco use and health. This review, prepared under the auspices of the Surgeon General's Advisory Committee on the Health Consequences of Using Smokeless Tobacco, is summarized in this article.

In the United States, smokeless tobacco is used predominantly in the forms of chewing tobacco and snuff. During the past 20 years, the production and consumption of these products have risen significantly in marked contrast to the decline in smokeless tobacco use during the first half of the century. National estimates indicate that more than 12 million persons age 12 and older in the United States used some form of smokeless tobacco in 1985, and half of these were regular users. The highest rates of smokeless tobacco use occurred among adolescent and young adult males.

Examination of the relevant epidemiologic, experimental, and clinical data revealed that oral use of smokeless tobacco is a significant health risk. This behavior can cause cancer in humans, and the evidence is strongest for cancer of the oral cavity, particularly at the site of tobacco placement. Smokeless tobacco use can also lead to the development of noncancerous oral conditions, particularly, oral leukoplakias and gingival recession. Further, the levels of nicotine in the body resulting from smokeless tobacco can lead to nicotine addiction and dependence.

IRONICALLY, WHILE CIGARETTE smoking has declined during the past 20 years, the production and apparent consumption of smokeless tobacco products have risen significantly. These increases are in marked contrast to the decline in smokeless tobacco use in the United States during the first half of this century. Smokeless tobacco products, particularly chewing tobacco and snuff, have recently emerged as popular products for the first time since the turn of the century.

The increased use and appeal of these products have raised serious questions about the health effects of this behavior. Almost 30 years after the Public Health Service's (PHS) first statement on the health effects of cigarette smoking, it is now possible to issue the first comprehensive, indepth review of the relationship between smokeless tobacco use and health. On March 25, 1986, the Surgeon General of the Public Health Service released a report on the health consequences of

Table 1. General principles in evaluating carcinogenic risk of chemicals or complex mixtures—International Agency for Research on Cancer

- Evidence for carcinogenicity in experimental animals
 - Qualitative aspects:
 - a. Experimental parameters under which chemical was tested.
 - b. Consistency with which chemical is shown to be carcinogenic.
 - c. Spectrum of neoplastic response.
 - d. Stage of tumor formation in which chemical involved.
 - e. Role of modifying factors.
 - Hormonal carcinogenesis.
 - Complex mixtures.
 - Quantitative aspects; increasing incidence of neoplasms with increasing exposure.
- Evidence for activity in short-term tests:
 - Use of valid test system.
 - Sufficiently wide dose range and duration of exposure to the agent and appropriate metabolic system employed in test.
 - Use of appropriate controls.
 - Specification of the purity of the compound, and in the case of complex mixtures, source and representativeness of sample tested.
- Evidence of carcinogenicity in humans
 - For studies showing positive association:
 - a. Existence of no identifiable positive bias.
 - b. Possibility of positive confounding considered.
 - c. Association unlikely to be due to chance alone.
 - d. Association is strong.
 - e. Existence of dose-response relationship.
 - For studies showing no association:
 - a. Existence of no identifiable negative bias.
 - b. Possibility of negative confounding considered.
 - c. Possible effects of misclassification of exposure or outcome have been weighed.

using smokeless tobacco. This report was the work of numerous experts within the Department of Health and Human Services and in the non-Federal scientific community, prepared under the direction of the Surgeon General's Advisory Committee on the Health Consequences of Using Smokeless Tobacco. It is scheduled for final publication in mid-June 1986.

This article is a summary of that report. It reviews the background, methods, findings, and conclusions of the Advisory Committee's efforts in completing the PHS's examination of the role of smokeless tobacco in cancer, noncancerous and precancerous oral diseases or conditions, addiction, and other adverse effects.

Historical Perspective

The use of smokeless tobacco is a worldwide practice with numerous variations in the nature of the product used as well as in the customs associated with its use. In the United States, smokeless tobacco is used predominantly in the

form of chewing tobacco and snuff. Chewing tobacco is chewed or held in the mouth between lip and gum. Three primary types of chewing tobacco are marketed: looseleaf, plug, and twist. Snuff has a much finer consistency than chewing tobacco and is held in place in the mouth without chewing. It is marketed in both dry and moist forms. The predominant mode of use of these nonsmoked tobaccos is oral, although dry snuff may be placed or inhaled into the nasal cavity. However, tobacco sniffing has been and remains a rare practice in the United States.

Smokeless tobacco was used in the American colonies in the early 1600s after snuff made its way from the Jamestown Colony in Virginia in 1611 through the efforts of John Rolfe (1). Tobacco chewing, however, was not reported until a century later in 1704 (2).

Scientific observations concerning the health effects of smokeless tobacco use were first noted in 1761 by John Hill, a London physician and botanist who reported five cases of polypuses, a "swelling in the nostril that was hard, black and adherent with the symptoms of an open cancer" (3). He concluded that nasal cancer could develop as a consequence of tobacco snuff use (sniffing).

Evidence that suggested a possible association between smokeless tobacco use and oral conditions in North Americans and Europeans was not reported until 1915 when Abbe identified several tobacco chewers among a series of oral cancer patients and commented that smokeless tobacco use might be a risk factor for this cancer (4). In the late 1930s in Sweden, Ahblom observed that more patients with buccal, gingival, and "mandibular" cancers than with other cancers reported the use of snuff or chewing tobacco (5). In the United States, case reports of oral cancer among users of snuff or chewing tobacco appeared in the early 1940s (6). The first epidemiologic study of smokeless tobacco was not conducted until the early 1950s (7). Since that time, several scientists have described a pattern of increased risk of oral cancer among smokeless tobacco users.

Investigations of other possible health effects of smokeless tobacco use (for example, noncancerous and precancerous oral effects, addiction, and other physiologic consequences) are more recent subjects of scientific inquiry. Such research has been undertaken primarily in the past two decades.

A brief review of the health consequences of smokeless tobacco was presented in the 1979 Surgeon General's report on smoking and health (8a). Since that review, the results of additional

studies addressing the health consequences of smokeless tobacco uses have become available, and they provide the basis for this comprehensive review.

Review Methods

For the purpose of evaluating the scientific evidence to be included in the review, the Advisory Committee employed the following criteria to determine causality. The same criteria have been used in a number of Surgeon General's reports on smoking during the past two decades:

- consistency of the association—similar observations by a number of independent investigators, at different times, and using different methods of study.
- strength of the association—high ratio of disease rate for the population exposed to the suspected risk factor compared to the population not exposed to the risk factor.
- specificity of the association—the precision with which one component of an associated pair predicts the occurrence of the other.
- temporal relationship of the association—exposure to the suspected etiologic factor preceding the disease.
- coherence of the association—observations consonant with all else that is known about the disease.

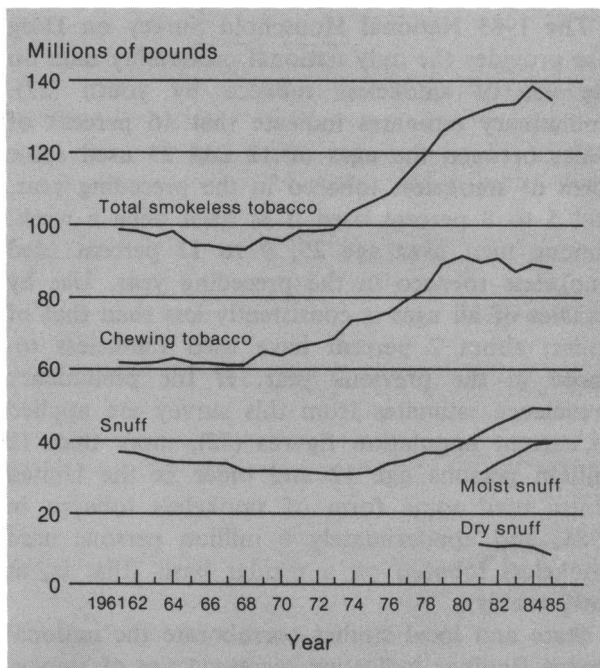
In addition to these criteria, the general principles employed by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) in evaluating the carcinogenic risk of chemicals or complex mixtures (table 1) were used as needed to supplement the criteria for primary causation (9).

Trends in Smokeless Tobacco Use

The use of smokeless tobacco products in the United States was widespread until the end of the 19th century. With the advent of antispitting laws, loss of social acceptability, and increased popularity of cigarette smoking, its use declined rapidly during much of this century. However, recent data indicate a resurgence in smokeless tobacco habits, particularly among teenage and young adult males.

Trends in production and sales. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) records on the annual production and sales of smokeless tobacco

Figure 1. Manufacturing trends: quantities of smokeless tobacco manufactured in the United States, 1961-85



serve as indicators of the population's consumption patterns. Because sales figures closely resemble those for production, only production data are reported. Between 1944 and 1968, total smokeless tobacco production declined 38.4 percent from 150.2 to 92.5 million pounds (10). Subsequently, production climbed to 135.6 million pounds in 1985, an increase of 42 percent since 1968 (10-16). Figure 1 depicts temporal trends in the quantities of smokeless tobacco (by type) that were manufactured in the United States from 1961 to 1985.

Trends in self-reported use: survey data. Surveys indicate that the highest rates of smokeless tobacco use occur among adolescent and young adult males. National data from 1964 to 1985 are available from eight different probability surveys and a survey of college students (8b, 17-21).

Between 1964 and 1985, the prevalence of smokeless tobacco use among adults remained fairly stable (17-19). However, a marked change in the age distribution of users took place during this period. In 1970, use of smokeless tobacco was most common among older men (unpublished data of the National Center for Health Statistics, National Health Interview Survey). In 1985, the highest rates of use were observed in the younger age groups (19, 21). Similar findings resulted from a smoking supplement to the 1985 Current Popula-

tion Survey of the U.S. census (unpublished data of the Office on Smoking and Health, PHS).

The 1985 National Household Survey on Drug Use provides the only national probability data on the use of smokeless tobacco by youth (21). Preliminary estimates indicate that 16 percent of males between the ages of 12 and 25 used some form of smokeless tobacco in the preceding year, and 5 to 8 percent used it at least once a week. Among men over age 25, 9 to 11 percent used smokeless tobacco in the preceding year. Use by females of all ages is consistently less than that of males; about 2 percent have used smokeless tobacco in the previous year. If the preliminary prevalence estimates from this survey are applied to current population figures (22), more than 12 million persons age 12 and older in the United States used some form of smokeless tobacco in 1985, and approximately 6 million persons used smokeless tobacco on a regular basis (that is, at least weekly).

State and local studies corroborate the national survey findings indicating increased use of smokeless tobacco products by young males. Although prevalence varies widely by region, use is not limited to a single region. In several parts of the country, as many as 25 to 35 percent of adolescent males have indicated current use of smokeless tobacco. Other findings of these studies include the following:

- Use of smokeless tobacco by youth is generally higher in rural than urban areas, in small communities, and in areas where there is a tradition of smokeless tobacco use (23-25).
- Information on smokeless tobacco use by ethnic and racial background indicates that rates for youth are comparable among Hispanic and non-Hispanic whites. Native American rates were consistently higher than those for whites and, in most locales, use was less common among Asians and blacks (25).
- Among youth, the likelihood of using smokeless tobacco appears to increase with age as well as over time (23-25, 27-30).
- Peers and family members are found consistently to be important influences on smokeless tobacco use by children and adolescents (23,26,28, 29,31-35).

Carcinogenesis

The Surgeon General's Advisory Committee performed a systematic review of the world's medical

literature describing experimental and human evidence pertinent to the evaluation of smokeless tobacco as a potential cause of cancer. Five categories of research relevant to assessing the role of smokeless tobacco in cancer causation were addressed:

- epidemiologic studies and case reports of oral cancer in relation to smokeless tobacco use.
- epidemiologic studies of other cancers in relation to smokeless tobacco use.
- chemical constituents of smokeless tobacco.
- metabolism of constituents of smokeless tobacco.
- experimental studies involving exposing laboratory animals to smokeless tobacco or its constituents.

Because smokeless tobacco products used in different regions of the world vary considerably in composition and usage patterns, North American and European data are considered separately from Asian data. Citations to the literature from India and other Asian countries where quids containing tobacco and other ingredients are commonly used orally focus on research that attempts to distinguish tobacco from other ingredients in the quids as possible determinants of cancer risk.

Epidemiologic studies and case reports of oral cancer in relation to smokeless tobacco use. The association between smokeless tobacco use and cancer is strongest for cancers of the oral cavity. The current age-adjusted incidence rate for cancers of the buccal cavity and pharynx in the United States is approximately 11 cases per 100,000 population per year, with these tumors accounting for about 3 percent of all cancer deaths (36).

Numerous clinical and pathological reports published during the past four decades in the United States and elsewhere have commented on the use of smokeless tobacco by oral cancer patients, and some authors have described the entity known as snuff-dipper's carcinoma (37-39). These findings have provided the basis for the hypothesis that the prolonged use of snuff or chewing tobacco is associated with an increased risk of low-grade, verrucal or squamous cell carcinoma of the buccal mucosa and gingivobuccal sulcus.

The number of epidemiologic investigations in North America and Europe evaluating the relation between smokeless tobacco and oral cancer is not large, and several studies have methodologic limitations. The major concern for validity in the epidemiologic studies of smokeless tobacco and

oral cancer is uncontrolled confounding. The two primary confounding factors of concern are alcohol consumption and smoking, both strong risk factors for oral cancer (40). It is not clear on a priori grounds, however, to what extent alcohol consumption would be correlated with smokeless tobacco use, and the relation between smoking and smokeless tobacco use may be complex. Users of smokeless tobacco may be more likely to have been smokers at some time. On the other hand, heavy users of smokeless tobacco typically cannot be heavy users of cigarettes, so that smoking is presumably negatively correlated with smokeless tobacco use. Failure to control confounding by smoking would therefore lead to underestimates of the effect of smokeless tobacco.

Most of the epidemiologic evidence comes from several case-control studies of oral cancer (7,41-53). The low prevalence of smokeless tobacco use in most North American populations contributes to a low statistical efficiency in most of these studies. Good information has been obtained, however, from studies that were either very large, were conducted in an area where there was a high prevalence of smokeless tobacco use, or were analyzed according to site within the oral cavity (since the effects of snuff use appear to be highly localized).

One such study was drawn from a female population in North Carolina where exposure rates are high and potentially confounding variables could be taken into account (41, 54-57). This investigation revealed that oral cancer occurs several times more frequently among snuff dippers than among nontobacco users and that the excess risk of cancers of the cheek and gum may reach nearly fiftyfold among long-term snuff users. The study showed that nearly all of the tumors of the cheek and gum were due to snuff use and that it is the use of snuff that accounts for the high rates of oral cancer mortality among southern women. The pattern of increased oral cancer risk among smokeless tobacco users also has been found in case-control studies conducted elsewhere in the South and in other parts of North America (19,20,22-26,28), with excess risks tending to be greatest for those anatomic sites where tobacco exposures are greatest.

The increased risk of oral cancer among smokeless tobacco users is most clearly demonstrable for users of snuff. Some investigations suggest that the use of chewing tobacco may also increase the risk of oral cancer (7,42,44,46,48), but evidence is not as strong and risks have yet to be quantified.

Evidence from parts of Asia, where the prevalence of smokeless tobacco use is high and oral cancer is the most common tumor, indicates a strong association between the chewing of quids that contain tobacco and other substances and oral cancer. Users of quids that contain tobacco have much higher oral cancer rates than users of quids that do not; the association is not confounded by cigarette smoking, raising the possibility that smokeless tobacco per se contributes to the elevated oral cancer risk in this part of the world (3,58-63).

Epidemiologic studies of other cancers in relation to smokeless tobacco use. The epidemiologic studies showing an association between the use of snuff and oral cancers indicate that topical exposure of tissues to smokeless tobacco can cause cancers at the site of the exposure. Case reports of neoplasms developing in the ear (64) and nose (3,65) of persons who used snuff at these sites raise the possibility that direct exposure may increase the risk in tissues outside the oral cavity; however, insufficient epidemiologic data exist to evaluate this possibility. Other tissues that come in contact with constituents of smokeless tobacco in more dilute concentrations include the linings of the esophagus, larynx (supraglottic portion), and stomach. Results of studies of cancers of these three sites in relation to smokeless tobacco are inconclusive; however, many studies had limited power to detect small increases in risk and did not control for relevant, potentially confounding variables. However, some studies of these three cancer sites do show an increase in risk in relation to the use of smokeless tobacco (48,52,66-73).

Constituents of smokeless tobacco can enter the bloodstream, and some are excreted in the urine. The kidney and bladder are thus potentially exposed to these products and their metabolites but presumably in lower concentrations than are tissues of the upper aerodigestive tract. Evidence suggests that the risk of bladder cancer is not altered to any large extent in persons who use smokeless tobacco products (49,52,73-81), but the results from studies of kidney cancer are inconsistent (82-84).

In summary, evidence for an association between smokeless tobacco use and cancers outside of the oral cavity in humans is sparse. While some investigations suggest that smokeless tobacco users may face increased risks of tumors of the upper aerodigestive tract, results are currently inconclusive.

Table 2. N-nitrosamines in smokeless tobacco

1. Volatile nitrosamines	
NDMA	Nitrosodimethylamine
NDEA	Nitrosodiethylamine
NMOR	Nitrosomorpholine
NPIP	Nitrosopiperidine
NPYR	Nitrosopyrrolidine
2. Nonvolatile nitrosamines	
NDELA	Nitrosodilethanolamine
NMBA	Nitrosomethylbutyric acid
NMPA	Nitrosomethylpropionic acid
NPIC	Nitrosopiperic acid
NPIPAC	Nitrosopiperidine-acetic acid
NPRO	Nitrosoproline
NPYRAC	Nitrosopyrrolidine-acetic acid
3. Tobacco-specific nitrosamines	
NAB	N'-Nitrosoanabasine
NAT	N'-Nitrosoanatabine
NNAL	4-(Methylnitrosamino)-1-(3-pyridyl)-1-butanol
NNK	4-(Methylnitrosamino)-1-(3-pyridyl)-1-butanone
NNN	N'-Nitrosornornicotine
NNO	4-(Methylnitrosamino)-1-(3-pyridyl)butene-1
Red NNA	4-(Methylnitrosamino)-4-(3-pyridyl)-1-butanol

Table 3. Permissible limits for individual N-nitrosamines in consumer products

Product	Permissible limit ppb (μg per kg)	Agency
Bacon (meat)	5	USDA ¹
Beer	5	FDA ²
Rubber nipples of baby bottles ...	10	FDA ³

¹ No "confirmable levels of nitrosamines" (reference 111).

² Regulation set for N-nitrosodimethylamine (reference 112).

³ Regulation set for any individual volatile N-nitrosamine (reference 113).

Chemical constituents of smokeless tobacco. In processed tobacco, more than 2,500 chemical compounds have been identified (85). Among these are three classes of carcinogens that are known to occur in smokeless tobacco products: N-nitrosamines (86-102), polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (103-108), and polonium-210 (108-110).

Tobacco leaves contain an abundance of amines in the form of proteins and alkaloids. Tobacco also contains up to 5 percent nitrates and traces of nitrite. Thus there is the potential for the formation of N-nitrosamines from the nitrate, nitrite, and amines during the processing of smokeless tobacco products. In tobacco, we distinguish between volatile nitrosamines, nonvolatile nitrosamines, and tobacco-specific nitrosamines (table 2). With the exception of some N-nitrosamino

acids, the nitrosamines in tobacco are animal carcinogens that are formed after harvesting of the tobacco during curing, fermentation, or aging.

The most prevalent organic carcinogens are the tobacco-specific N-nitrosamines that are formed from the *Nicotiana* alkaloids during the processing of tobacco leaves. The tobacco-specific nitrosamines NNN and NNK are powerful carcinogens in rats, mice, and hamsters (9) and often have been detected in smokeless tobacco at levels 100 or more times higher than the regulated levels of other nitrosamines found in bacon, beer, and other consumer products (tables 3 and 4). NAB and NNAL are moderately carcinogenic, and NAT is inactive in rats in doses up to 9 millimols per kilogram (9). The carcinogenicity of NNO and Red NNA has not been tested.

A number of polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons have been identified in processed tobacco. Analyses of British snuff in 1957 showed levels of 260 ppb of pyrene, 335 ppb of fluoranthene, and 72 ppb of benzo(a)pyrene (107). In the five most popular snuff brands in the United States that were analyzed in 1985, benzo(a)pyrene ranged from less than 0.1 to 63 ppb (108).

Polonium-210 has long been incriminated as a human carcinogen (109). In recent studies of the five leading U.S. snuff brands, polonium-210 ranged from 0.16 to 1.22 pCi per g (108).

Metabolism of constituents of smokeless tobacco.

The tobacco-specific nitrosamines NNK and NNN are quantitatively the major known carcinogens that are present in snuff and other types of smokeless tobacco. Molecular changes that are induced in the genetic material of tobacco chewers are most likely to arise from the metabolism of these two nitrosamines. Review of the literature provides persuasive evidence that the carcinogenic nitrosamines NNN and NNK are metabolized by target tissues of experimental animals (114-131) and by human tissues (132,133) to intermediates that can modify the genetic material of the cell.

Exposure of laboratory animals to smokeless tobacco or its constituents. Chewing tobacco and extracts from various chewing tobaccos have been tested by oral administration in mice (134), by topical application to the oral mucosa of mice, rats, and hamsters (135-140), and by subcutaneous administration (141) and skin application to mice (9,141-148). These investigations failed to demonstrate significantly increased tumor production. Short application times and low-dose exposures,

however, limit the evaluation of the carcinogenicity of chewing tobacco or its extracts. Bioassays of snuff have likewise generally shown no excess cancer (139,149-155), although some experiments suggest that it may cause oral tumors in rats and hamsters that are infected with herpes simplex virus (150, 152, 153). The latter finding raises some concern in as much as 20 to 40 percent of the U.S. population have periodic occurrences of labial herpes (156).

Among the chemical components of snuff, the tobacco-specific nitrosamines NNN and NNK are powerful animal carcinogens. The doses of NNN and NNK that produce tumors in experimental animals are close to the doses estimated from lifetime exposure among human snuff dippers (157,158).

Noncancerous and Precancerous Effects

The health effects of smokeless tobacco use on the oral tissues were addressed through a systematic review of the relevant scientific literature on animal and human studies. The major areas reviewed were the effects of smokeless tobacco use on the oral soft tissues, the periodontium, and the teeth. The potential for oral tissues altered by smokeless tobacco use to transform to dysplasia and malignancy was also assessed.

Oral leukoplakia. Smokeless tobacco use is responsible for the development of a portion of oral leukoplakias (white patches or plaques of the oral mucosa) in both teenage and adult users. Studies from both the United States and Scandinavia demonstrate this association (7,159-165). In two studies, a higher prevalence of oral leukoplakia was found in users compared with nonusers of smokeless tobacco—22.7 percent compared with 4.7 percent (163) and 34.0 percent compared with 7.4 percent (159). In all of these studies, between 8 and 59 percent of smokeless tobacco or snuff users were found to have oral leukoplakia.

Dose-response effects have been noted by a number of investigators. The duration of use (in years) and daily exposure (in hours or minutes) to smokeless tobacco appear to be critical in the development and severity of oral leukoplakia. Three studies using similar approaches to the definition of oral leukoplakia and to the measurement of exposure noted this effect (161,162,165). In addition, in several studies of persons who had stopped smokeless tobacco use, the oral leukoplakia disappeared (7,160,166,167).

Table 4. Range of individual nitrosamines present in snuff tobaccos

Nitrosamine	Nitrosamine level ppb (µg per kg)
NNN	¹ 5,800- 64,000
NNK	¹ 100- 3,100
NAT	¹ 3,300-215,000
NAB	¹ 200- 6,700
NDELA.....	² 160- 6,800

¹ Range in the leading 5 U.S. brands (1984-85).

² Range in 13 U.S. brands (1980-85).

SOURCES: references 88, 90, 91.

It appears that the oral leukoplakia noted in smokeless tobacco users is found commonly at the habitual site of tobacco placement. Using a similar grading classification for snuff-induced lesions (161,168), all of the mucosal pathology that was noted in several studies was at the site of habitual tobacco placement (161,162,164,165). Similarly, the majority of the oral leukoplakia that was described in the case reports (166,167,169-173) was found where the tobacco was usually placed.

Transformation of oral soft tissues. Smokeless tobacco-associated lesions that have been traditionally classified as leukoplakias (white lesions) reflect varying degrees of clinical differentiation and may persist or progress with continued smokeless tobacco use. In fact, some snuff-induced oral leukoplakic lesions have been noted upon continued smokeless tobacco use to undergo transformation to a dysplastic state. A portion of these dysplastic lesions have been found to develop into carcinomas of either a verrucous or squamous cell variety.

In characterizing the role of smokeless tobacco use in the clinical and histologic course of oral lesions, oral leukoplakia should be considered a dynamic changing lesion of the oral mucosa (174). To achieve comparability of results among investigators, a standard system for gauging epithelial dysplasia is needed. Because ethical considerations do not allow lesions to be monitored continuously from benign states to moderate and severe dysplasias and to carcinoma in situ, the next best alternative is to provide estimates of risk for malignant transformation based on empirical and clinical observations or at least to quantify descriptively the association that smokeless tobacco-induced lesions have with other lesions or other potential etiologic factors.

The body of literature on smokeless tobacco-induced lesions in the oral mucosa and their potential for malignant transformation allows for the development of a conceptual model of the natural history of smokeless tobacco-induced lesions (fig. 2). This model is a composite of various prospective, retrospective, cross-sectional, and case studies that relate to smokeless tobacco-induced lesions. It reflects progressive changes that may occur in some persons who are habitual users of smokeless tobacco and potential outcomes that could include death or disfigurement for some who use smokeless tobacco for several decades.

The data are clear that habitual smokeless tobacco use can produce mucosal lesions. It is also clear that where groups of patients with smokeless tobacco-induced leukoplakias have been followed for several years, cases of cancer have been identified (175-177). Finally, among studies of oral cancers in habitual smokeless tobacco users, there appears to be a consistent finding of leukoplakias either having been previously excised in the area of habitual tobacco placement (167,176,178) or being found concurrently and in proximity to oral cancers (7,46,179-182).

Gingiva, periodontal tissue, and salivary glands. The relationship of smokeless tobacco use and the health of gingival and periodontal tissue has received minimal study. Available studies of the effects of smokeless tobacco use on gingival and periodontal tissues have resulted in equivocal findings. Furthermore, variations in study designs and diagnostic criteria make comparisons between available studies inappropriate. Thus the effects of smokeless tobacco use on these tissues are not clearly understood.

While gingival recession is a common outcome from smokeless tobacco use (161,163,171), gingivitis may or may not occur (163,183). Because longitudinal data are not available, the role of smokeless tobacco in the development and progression of gingivitis or periodontitis has not been confirmed.

Evidence concerning the effects of smokeless tobacco use on the salivary glands is similarly inconclusive. Limited evidence suggests a possible relationship between the use of snuff and damage to the salivary glands (165,177,184,185). Should this be the case, the loss of salivary gland function can result in the decreased production of saliva and the ultimate loss of a protective buffer for the oral epithelium and the teeth against numerous exogenous factors such as infectious agents, including dental caries.

Teeth. Negative health effects on the teeth from smokeless tobacco use are suspected but unconfirmed (186,187). Present evidence, albeit sparse, does suggest that the combination of smokeless tobacco use in persons with existing gingivitis may increase the prevalence of dental caries compared with nonusers without concomitant gingivitis (163).

Plaque, calculus, and staining are extrinsic factors that may be associated with smokeless tobacco use (35,171,188,189). No quantifiable evidence currently documents the risk of smokeless tobacco use compared with nonuse in the development of plaque, calculus, or staining or the relationship of staining to oral disease conditions.

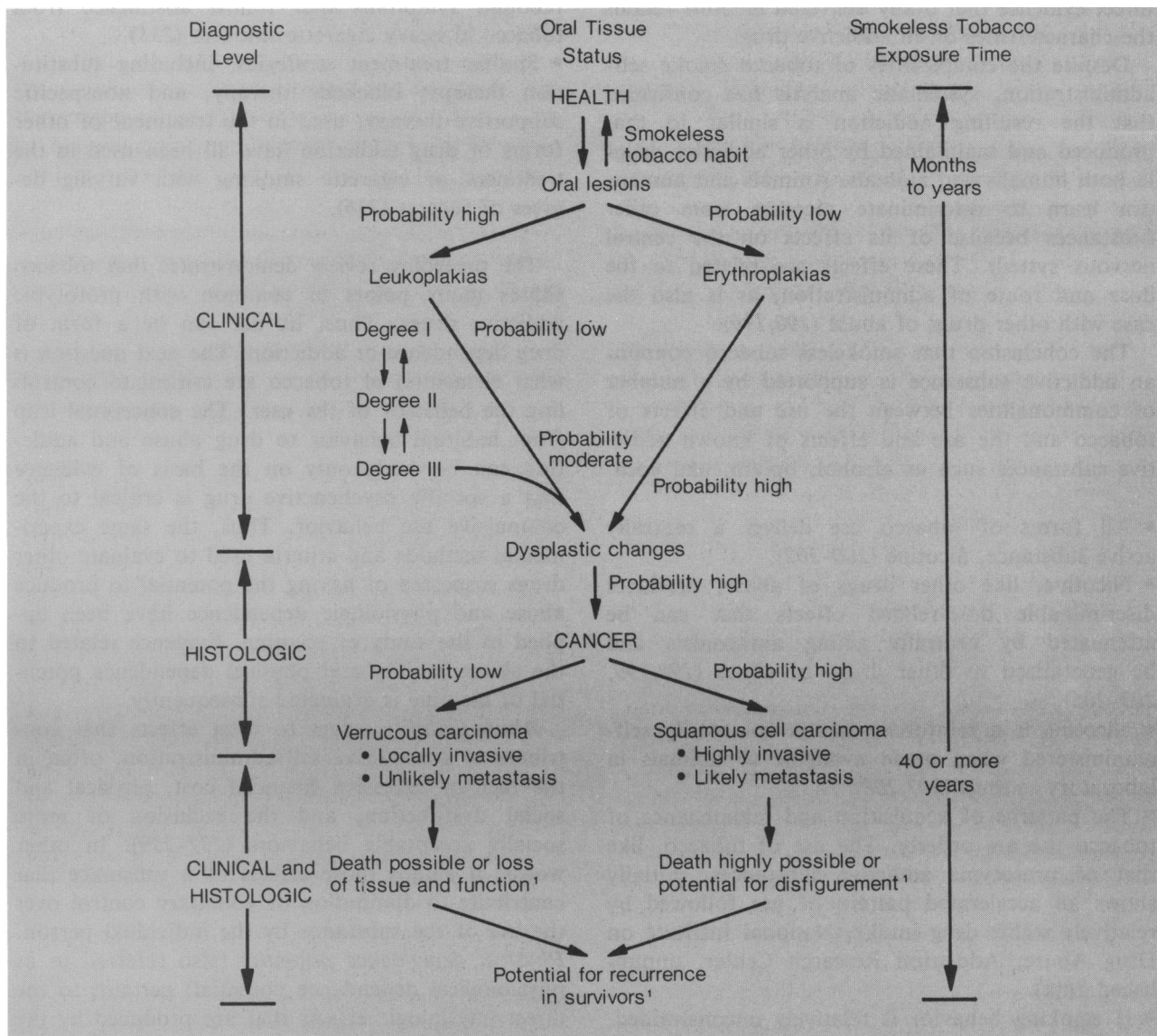
Addiction and Other Physiologic Effects

The consequences of exposure to nicotine from smokeless tobacco are examined in this section. This review draws from the vast literature on the effects of nicotine delivered via smoking and intravenously and includes recent evidence of the effects of orally delivered nicotine. Three areas of research are addressed. The first describes the pharmacokinetics of nicotine, including absorption, distribution, and elimination. The second reviews the established evidence that nicotine is an addictive and dependence-producing substance. The third reviews the multisystem physiologic effects of nicotine and examines the evidence pertaining to the potential contributory role of nicotine in the causation of several diseases.

Pharmacokinetics of nicotine. An examination of the pharmacokinetics of nicotine (that is, nicotine absorption, distribution, and elimination) resulting from smoking and smokeless tobacco use indicates that the magnitude of nicotine exposure is similar for both. Assuming a daily consumption of 10 grams of smokeless tobacco, the habitual user can be exposed to roughly 130 to 250 milligrams (mg) nicotine per day. Within a similar range, a person who smokes a pack of cigarettes daily (190) would be exposed to 180 mg nicotine per day (assuming 9 mg nicotine per cigarette).

Although exposure to nicotine may be similar, the absorption and distribution characteristics of nicotine via oral smokeless tobacco use versus cigarette smoking differ. Smokeless tobacco products are buffered to an alkaline pH that facilitates absorption; more nicotine is absorbed from the use of smokeless tobacco products than from cigarette smoking. The rate of absorption of nicotine from oral snuff (and presumably chewing tobacco),

Figure 2. Conceptual natural history of oral mucosal changes associated with the use of smokeless tobacco



¹These factors depend upon stage of diagnosis, form of treatment and continuation of habit(s).

however, is more gradual than after cigarette smoking (191). The direct absorption of nicotine from smoking into the pulmonary circulation, rather than through the portal or systemic venous circulation, results in a very short lag time between smoking and the appearance of nicotine in the brain. Thus, central nervous system concentrations of nicotine from smokeless tobacco are likely to be lower than from cigarette smoking (192).

In contrast to the absorption and distribution differences, intake of nicotine and nicotine levels in habitual users of smokeless tobacco are similar to those that are observed in habitual cigarette smokers (193-196). Furthermore, nicotine accumulates over 6 to 8 hours of regular smoking, and

nicotine levels persist overnight (197). The same accumulation is probable with repeated smokeless tobacco use.

Nicotine addiction. Given the nicotine content of smokeless tobacco, its ability to produce high and sustained blood levels of nicotine, and the well-established data implicating nicotine as an addictive substance, one may deduce that smokeless tobacco is capable of producing addiction in users. The evidence that smokeless tobacco is addicting includes the pharmacologic role of the nicotine dose in regulating tobacco intake, the commonalities between nicotine and other prototypic dependence-producing substances, the abuse liabil-

ity and dependence potential of nicotine, and the direct evidence that orally delivered nicotine retains the characteristics of an addictive drug.

Despite the complexities of tobacco smoke self-administration, systematic analysis has confirmed that the resulting addiction is similar to that produced and maintained by other addictive drugs in both humans and animals. Animals and humans can learn to discriminate nicotine from other substances because of its effects on the central nervous system. These effects are related to the dose and route of administration, as is also the case with other drugs of abuse (198,199).

The conclusion that smokeless tobacco contains an addictive substance is supported by a number of commonalities between the use and effects of tobacco and the use and effects of known addictive substances such as alcohol, opium, and coca-

- All forms of tobacco use deliver a centrally active substance, nicotine (200-202).
- Nicotine, like other drugs of abuse, produces discriminable dose-related effects that can be attenuated by centrally acting antagonists and be generalized to other drugs of abuse (198,199, 203-206).
- Nicotine is a reinforcer that is voluntarily self-administered when made available to animals in laboratory settings (207,208).
- The patterns of acquisition and maintenance of tobacco use are orderly. The use of tobacco, like that of prototypic addictive substances, initially shows an accelerated pattern of use followed by relatively stable drug intake (National Institute on Drug Abuse, Addiction Research Center, unpublished data).
- If smoking behavior is relatively unconstrained, regular patterns of use develop that closely resemble those of psychomotor stimulant self-administration in animals (209) and in humans (210-213).
- Self-administration of tobacco varies as a function of nicotine dose manipulated by changing the quantity (unit dose) (210,214), by pretreating the individual (animal or human) with either an agonist or antagonist (215-218), or by altering the rate of nicotine elimination (219).
- Tolerance of nicotine develops with repeated use (neuroadaptation). A variety of mechanisms account for tolerance to many of nicotine's effects, including those of a metabolic (220), behavioral (221-223), and physiologic (224-226) nature.
- Nicotine produces therapeutic effects, including enhanced performance on a variety of cognitive tasks (227-229), mood regulation (230), and appe-

titute suppression (231-234). Nicotine gum alleviates rebound symptoms that follow abstinence from tobacco in heavy cigarette smokers (235).

- Similar treatment strategies, including substitution therapy, blockade therapy, and nonspecific supportive therapy, used in the treatment of other forms of drug addiction have all been used in the treatment of cigarette smoking with varying degrees of success (236).

The preceding review demonstrates that tobacco shares many points in common with prototypic addictive drugs. Thus, its use can be a form of drug dependence or addiction. The next question is what element(s) of tobacco are critical to controlling the behavior of the user. The conceptual leap from habitual behavior to drug abuse and addiction can be made only on the basis of evidence that a specific psychoactive drug is critical to the compulsive use behavior. Thus, the same experimental methods and criteria used to evaluate other drugs suspected of having the potential to produce abuse and physiologic dependence have been applied to the study of nicotine. Evidence related to the abuse liability and physical dependence potential of nicotine is evaluated subsequently.

Abuse liability refers to drug effects that contribute to compulsive self-administration, often in the face of excessive financial cost, physical and social dysfunction, and the exclusion of more socially acceptable behaviors (237-239). In other words, it entails those effects of a substance that contribute to diminution of voluntary control over the use of the substance by the individual person. *Physical dependence potential* (also referred to as physiological dependence potential) pertains to the direct physiologic effects that are produced by the repeated administration of a drug that results in neuroadaptation (201,237). Neuroadaptation is characterized by demonstrated tolerance to the effects of the drug and the occurrence of physiologic withdrawal signs following the termination of drug administration.

It has been confirmed that nicotine can function in all of the capacities that characterize a drug with a liability to widespread abuse. Specifically, nicotine is psychoactive (199), producing transient dose-related changes in mood and feeling. It is a euphoriant that produces dose-related increases in scores on standard measures of euphoria (199,238). It is a reinforcer (or reward) in both human and animal intravenous self-administration paradigms, functioning as do other drugs of abuse (207,240,241). Additionally, it has been demon-

strated that nicotine via smoking not only produces these effects but causes neuroadaptation leading to tolerance and physiologic dependence (242-247). Taken together, these results confirm the hypothesis that the role of nicotine in the compulsive use of tobacco is the same as the role of morphine in the compulsive use of opium derivatives or of cocaine in the compulsive use of coca derivatives.

All commonly marketed and consumed smokeless tobacco products contain substantial quantities of nicotine (193,248-250). The nicotine is delivered to the central nervous system in addicting quantities when used in the fashion that each form is commonly used (or as recommended in smokeless tobacco marketing campaigns). The delivery of nicotine in the form of smokeless tobacco is not believed to alter the addictive properties of nicotine. There is now direct evidence that orally delivered nicotine retains the characteristics of an addictive drug (251-253).

Several other characteristics of tobacco products in general, including smokeless tobacco, may function to increase further the number of persons who are subject to nicotine dependence: nicotine-delivering products are widely available and relatively inexpensive; and the self-administration of such products is legal, relatively well tolerated by society, and produces minimal disruption to cognitive and behavioral performance. Nicotine produces a variety of individual-specific therapeutic actions such as mood and performance enhancement; the brief effects of nicotine ensure that conditioning occurs, because the behavior is associated with numerous concomitant environmental stimuli.

Physiologic and pathogenic effects. The exposure to nicotine from smokeless tobacco is similar in magnitude to nicotine exposure from cigarette smoking. It is, therefore, likely that those health consequences of smoking caused by nicotine also would be associated with smokeless tobacco use. Areas of particular concern in which nicotine may play a contributory or supportive role in the pathogenesis of disease include coronary artery and peripheral vascular disease (254-258), hypertension (259,260), peptic ulcer disease (261-263), and fetal mortality and morbidity (264-269).

Conclusions

After a careful examination of the relevant epidemiologic, experimental, and clinical data, the

'Although exposure to nicotine may be similar, the absorption and distribution characteristics of nicotine via oral smokeless tobacco use versus cigarette smoking differ. Smokeless tobacco products are buffered to an alkaline pH that facilitates absorption; more nicotine is absorbed from the use of smokeless tobacco products than from cigarette smoking.'

Advisory Committee concluded that the oral use of smokeless tobacco represents a significant health risk. It is not a safe substitute for smoking cigarettes. It can cause cancer and a number of noncancerous oral conditions and can lead to nicotine addiction and dependence. The major conclusions of the review follow:

1. It is estimated that smokeless tobacco was used by at least 12 million people in the United States in 1985 and that half of these were regular users. The use of smokeless tobacco, particularly moist snuff, is increasing, especially among male adolescents and young male adults.

2. The scientific evidence is strong that the use of snuff can cause cancer in humans. The evidence for causality is strongest for cancer of the oral cavity, wherein cancer may occur several times more frequently in snuff dippers compared with nontobacco users. The excess risk of cancer of the cheek and gum may be nearly fiftyfold among long-term snuff users.

3. Some investigations suggest that the use of chewing tobacco may also increase the risk of oral cancer, but the evidence is not as strong and the risks have yet to be quantified.

4. Experimental investigations reveal potent carcinogens in smokeless tobacco. These include nitrosamines, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, and radiation-emitting polonium. The tobacco-specific nitrosamines often have been detected at levels 100 or more times higher than U.S. Government-regulated levels of other nitrosamines permitted in foods eaten by Americans.

5. Smokeless tobacco use can lead to the development of oral leukoplakias (white patches or plaques of the oral mucosa), particularly at the site of tobacco placement. Based on evidence from several studies, a portion of leukoplakias can

undergo transformation to dysplasia and further to cancer.

6. Gingival recession is a commonly reported outcome of smokeless tobacco use.

7. A number of studies have shown that nicotine exposure from smoking cigarettes can cause addiction in humans. In this regard, nicotine is similar to other addictive drugs such as morphine and cocaine. Since nicotine levels in the body resulting from smokeless tobacco use are similar in magnitude to nicotine levels from cigarette smoking, it is concluded that smokeless tobacco use also can be addictive. Besides, recent studies have shown that nicotine administered orally has the potential to produce a physiologic dependence.

8. Some evidence suggests that nicotine may play a contributory or supportive role in the pathogenesis of coronary artery and peripheral vascular disease, hypertension, peptic ulcers, and fetal mortality and morbidity.

These conclusions are substantially in agreement with those published following a recent National Institutes of Health Consensus Development Conference on the Health Implications of Smokeless Tobacco Use (270). The strength of the association between the conditions just cited and smokeless tobacco use, combined with the upward trend in this behavior, should instill vigilance among public health officials and others responsible for guiding the health of our nation. It is critical that our society be made aware of the new knowledge about the health consequences of smokeless tobacco use so that informed decisions can be made regarding its use.

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Smoking and Smokeless Tobacco Use Among Adolescents: Trends and Intervention Results

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Synopsis.....

Data from a 2-year study describe tobacco use trends, perceptions, and prevention effects for 1,281 5th and 6th graders enrolled in 12 randomly selected Washington State elementary schools. Youths were pretested, then randomly divided by school into skills, discussion, and control groups.

Preventive intervention curriculums for the skills and discussion groups included age-relevant information on smoked and smokeless tobacco use, peer testimonials, debates, games, and homework. Youths in the skills group also learned communication and problem-solving methods for handling difficult situations around tobacco use. Following intervention, youths were posttested, then retested semiannually for 2 years.

During the 2-year study, three-quarters of all smokers and nonusers and half of all smokeless tobacco users maintained their statuses. Only 10 percent of all smokers and 3 percent of all smokeless users quit their habits. One in six reported new tobacco use, one-third of smokers began using smokeless tobacco, and two-thirds of all smokeless users began smoking during the study. Most youths at final measurement perceived smokeless tobacco as less of a health risk than smoking. Nearly one in two of all smokeless users intended to smoke, and two-thirds were actually smoking at 24-month followup. Both smoked and smokeless tobacco use rates increased in all groups, and youths in the skills intervention group consistently showed the lowest rates relative to the other groups. These findings demonstrate the potential of skills intervention methods for lowering tobacco use rates among adolescents.