

Washington Task Force Includes Tobacco Prevention and Control in Cancer Moonshot Recommendation

Truth Initiative CEO and President, Robin Koval, applauds step towards drastically reducing preventable cancer deaths.

By including tobacco control and primary prevention in the Washington task force recommendations for the National Cancer Moonshot Initiative, tremendous strides have been made towards reducing largely preventable cancer deaths. According to the U.S. Surgeon General, one-third of cancer deaths are caused by smoking. That means that supporting this addition to the Moonshot Initiative provides the opportunity to save the nearly half a million people, including 170,000 cancer patients, who would otherwise die due to tobacco use.

Primary prevention will save the most lives because additionally to screening for existing cancer, it works towards reducing the number of Americans who engage in the behaviors that increase the risk of cancer using population based tools. Not only is this the most effective method, but it is also the most cost effective since preventing cancer costs a fraction of what treatment costs. According to the CDC's estimations, they spend \$393 per year of life saved through its tobacco public education campaign. Compare that to the \$20,000-\$50,000 per quality-adjusted life year during cancer treatments. The numbers speak for themselves.

Besides being cost-efficient, primary prevention has been proven to have a powerful impact. In fact, since the first U.S. Surgeon General's report on smoking and health in 1964, it is estimated that tobacco control efforts have led to at least 8 million fewer premature smoking-caused deaths.

Several tobacco control policies would successfully reduce tobacco use, including:

- Comprehensive smoke-free laws and policies.
- States funding comprehensive tobacco prevention programs at least at the minimum levels recommended by the CDC.
- Increased tobacco product prices, through tax increases, minimum pricing, and bans on coupon redemption.
- Providing access to evidence-based smoking cessation treatments through population-based public health interventions, promoted by a public health-driven and adequately-funded national media campaign, and covered by public and private health insurance.
- Well-funded mass media campaigns to prevent youth smoking and promote smoking cessation among adults.
- Greater restrictions on minors' access to tobacco products.
- Tobacco product regulation.

If the Moonshot chooses to implement these policies smoking rates would take huge dive and smokers, as well as those suffering from secondhand smoking, would be less likely to suffer from tobacco related cancers and premature deaths.