

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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TOBACCO-FREE Rx CALLS ON WALGREENS AND RITE AID TO JOIN WITH CVS IN ENDING TOBACCO SALES IN PHARMACIES

TobaccofreeRx, a national interdisciplinary group of healthcare professionals and public health advocates, today asked Walgreens and Rite Aid to join with CVS and end the sale of tobacco products in their pharmacies. This is in response to [CVS' announcement today](#), in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, that CVS plans to cease tobacco sales.

Walgreens is a Fortune 500 corporation that operates the nation's largest drugstore chain. Walgreens announced on February 3, 2014 that it was offering free blood pressure testing in support of American Heart Month; but, paradoxically, it continues to profit from the sale of tobacco products in almost all of its 8,200 drugstores nationwide. Rite Aid operates the largest drugstore chain on the East Coast, has approximately 4,600 drugstores nationwide, and continues to sell the leading preventable cause of death.

According to [data from the Centers for Disease Control](#), tobacco use causes more than 480,000 deaths annually in the United States. Almost five percent of US cigarette sales occur in pharmacies, and that figure does not include the additional cigarette sales that occur in establishments such as grocery stores and department stores that operate a pharmacy on the premises.

"We applaud the decision by CVS to end tobacco sales in pharmacies, [noting, however, that the move is long overdue](#)," said Vinayak Jha, MD, a pulmonary and critical care physician and assistant professor of medicine at The George Washington University School of Medicine & Health Sciences. Dr. Jha is a founder of TobaccofreeRx. "Walgreens and Rite Aid should rapidly adopt the same policy. I don't know of a more potent way to make cigarettes more socially acceptable than to sell them in every corporate drugstore in America."

"If Walgreens and Rite Aid continue to sell tobacco products, they are forfeiting their right to claim they are part of the health care team" said Alan Blum, MD, a professor of family medicine and director of the University of Alabama Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society. "Selling tobacco products in pharmacy environments directly contradicts the pharmacist's role as a health-care provider and undermines our profession's efforts to reduce the prevalence of tobacco use," says Karen Hudmon, professor of pharmacy at the Purdue University College of Pharmacy.

Dr. Jha noted that the United States may be one of the only countries in the world where pharmacies sell cigarettes. Many professional and public health organizations including the American Pharmacists Association, the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, the American Medical Association, and the American Academy of Pediatrics support bans on tobacco sales in pharmacies. For additional information about the issue, please visit our website www.TobaccofreeRx.org.

About TobaccofreeRx

TobaccofreeRx is an interdisciplinary group of pharmacists, pharmacy school and medical school faculty, pharmacy students, nurses, physicians, attorneys, and health advocates that was organized in 2010 to end the sale of tobacco products in pharmacies. The Board of Advisors includes Alan Blum, Lisa Causey-Streete, K. Michael Cummings, Bob Gordon, Laura Gube, Karen Hudmon, Paul Jungnickel, Patrick Malone, Judy Rightmyer, Elizabeth Sullivan, Ashley Weems, and D.J. Wilson. Laura Russell serves as researcher and public health advocate for TobaccofreeRx

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