
MEDICAL FACULTY ASSOCIATES

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Tobacco-free pharmacies in Washington, DC Endorsement

Policy

We urge the Council of the District of Columbia to promptly pass legislation that eliminates tobacco sales in any establishment in Washington, DC that operates a pharmacy. By so doing, we join a broad coalition of pharmacy, community, public health, and medical organizations. We must end the inconsistency of selling tobacco in establishments where pharmacists play a crucial role in the public's health by dispensing physician-prescribed medication and providing one-on-one health counseling.

Rationale

The Centers for Disease Control has determined that tobacco use is the most important preventable cause of disease, disability, and death in the United States.¹ Each year there are more than 400,000 deaths in the United States attributable to cigarette smoking.² Tobacco use is highly addictive,³ making it difficult even for motivated persons to quit. Preventing children and adults from trying tobacco in the first place is therefore crucial, with the use of both anti-tobacco messaging campaigns as well as marketing restrictions that attach a stigma to tobacco use.

Pharmacists are licensed practitioners regulated by the DC Department of Health's Health Professional Licensing Administration.⁴ They are valuable sources of information for the public about medications,⁵ general health,⁶ and tobacco cessation.⁷ Pharmacies are closely tied to the rest of the health care system and many pharmacies now receive prescriptions directly from physicians' offices via e-prescribing, as part of a federal plan to improve patient safety and modernize health information technology.⁸ Pharmacists cannot be expected to provide effective and credible tobacco cessation counseling in establishments selling the very product they are counseling against! The American Pharmacists' Association recently reiterated its strong stand against tobacco sales in pharmacies.⁹

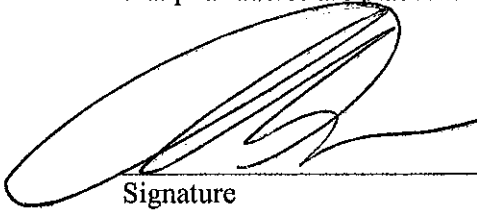
Precedent

Legislation providing for tobacco-free pharmacies will be part of the broad network of regulations and laws meant to reverse the harms caused by tobacco. For example, Congress in 2009 increased the federal cigarette tax.¹⁰ At the state level, twenty-seven states and the District of Columbia have passed laws prohibiting smoking in almost all public places and workplaces, in order to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke.¹¹ The City of San Francisco in 2008¹² and the City of Boston in 2009¹³ have both enacted legislation prohibiting tobacco sales in pharmacies. San Francisco's ban has withstood legal challenge by a tobacco corporation in a ruling by the Ninth Circuit US Court of Appeals.¹⁴

DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE

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The people of the District of Columbia deserve similar protection, with an official recognition that pharmacies are places where cigarettes and other tobacco products should not be sold.



Signature
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Date

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