

2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference of the European Society for Prevention Research, Lisbon,  
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Press release

### **Easy to see smoking in films in Europe**

A recent study conducted in six European countries – in Germany, Iceland, Italy, Poland, The Netherlands, and United Kingdom – found that sixty nine percent of the commercially most successful films of the last years show images of smoking. The results of the study will be published online first in a December 2011 issue in the journal *Tobacco Control* (doi:10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2011-050050).

The group of researchers further reports that it is very easy for young people in Europe to get in contact with smoking in films. Based on their analyses, only 2% of films with smoking have an “adult” rating in Europe, classified as suitable for people 18 years and above. In comparison, 41% of the same films are rated “R” in the USA, which means they are rated as suitable for audiences from 17 years.

Why does access to smoking in films matter? The importance of the findings base on cumulating evidence on the role of smoking in films on smoking uptake of young people. For example, a large recent study of the same group on more than 16,000 young people in Europe found a clear indication that seeing smoking in films fosters real smoking. The relationship seems to be “dose-response”, which means “the more, the more”: “The more smoking scenes a young person has seen in his life, the more likely she has tried smoking” says Prof. Reiner Hanewinkel from the German Institute for Therapy and Health Research (IFT-Nord), who is the coordinator of the EU-funded research project.

Further evidence in support of this argument comes from several studies published in a recent issue of *Thorax* (October 2011), one of the world’s leading journals for respiratory medicine. All these studies confirmed that teenagers who are exposed to smoking imagery in films are significantly more likely to start (and continue) smoking themselves, even after controlling for social, family, and behavioural factors that could explain the relationship.

“Films ought to be rated by exposure to smoking in the same way that they are currently rated by level of violence: smoking and its adverse consequences are certainly a larger public health problem,” Professor Hanewinkel concludes.

The issue of smoking in films will also be handled on the 2<sup>nd</sup> *International Conference of the European Society for Prevention Research* in Lisbon. There will be an open workshop on December 7<sup>th</sup> (1pm-3pm) for all interested audiences. Further information can be obtained from <http://www.euspr.org>.