



Keynote Lecture VII

Tobacco and the Future of Public Health

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Karen M Emmons, PhD, is a Professor of Society, Human Development, and Health at the Harvard School of Public Health and the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. Dr Emmons received her Bachelor's degree from University of Illinois, and her PhD from the State University of New York at Stony Brook. She is currently the Deputy Director of the Dana-Farber's Center for Community-Based Research, and Director of its Tobacco Control Program. She is also Director of the Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Center's Health Communication Core, and the Associate Director of The Center for Social Equity and Cancer at the Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Center.

Dr Emmons is a clinical psychologist, and has expertise in health communication, and the development and evaluation of behavioral interventions to reduce the risk of preventable disease. Her research has focused on tobacco control and environmental tobacco smoke exposure. She has also conducted a number of NIH-funded studies targeting a variety of preventable cancers, including colorectal cancer, skin cancer, and lung cancer. Her research focuses primarily on community-based approaches to cancer prevention and control among low income and underserved populations and among cancer survivors, with an emphasis on strategies for enhancing motivation for health behavior change. Dr Emmons' work also includes a focus on the use of health communication technologies to deliver prevention interventions to underserved populations.

Tobacco use is the number one preventable public health problem in the world. There are 1.1 billion smokers worldwide, with increasing smoking prevalence in the developing world. By the year 2030, it is estimated that there will be 10 million deaths per year worldwide due to tobacco use. Persistent and growing social disparities in tobacco use have been documented in the US and many other countries. A comprehensive approach to tobacco control that considers social factors is essential if we are to stem the tide of the public health crisis posed by tobacco use.

In the US, there have been considerable efforts at comprehensive tobacco control, including policy approaches, legislation, prevention programs, and treatment efforts. A brief review of these efforts and evidence for their impact on smoking rates will be provided. In addition, the response by both the tobacco industry and the US government will also be reviewed. In order to expand the progress made to date, models need to be developed to increase our understanding of the factors that drive tobacco use in different population groups and in different settings. Recent models focused on social context of tobacco use will be presented. There is an urgent need for increased efforts to disseminate evidence-based strategies for smoking prevention and cessation. There is a large body of evidence, and it is now essential that it be implemented, and the efficacy in different settings and with different population groups be evaluated. The discussion will include a consideration of how these models may work in developing countries, and the unique issues to be faced in those settings.