

## Tobacco sales to minors in Italy

Silvano Gallus<sup>1</sup>, Irene Tramacere<sup>1</sup>, Piergiorgio Zuccaro<sup>2</sup>, Paolo Colombo<sup>3</sup>, and Carlo La Vecchia<sup>1,4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Istituto di Ricerche Farmacologiche "Mario Negri", Milan; <sup>2</sup>Dipartimento del Farmaco, Istituto Superiore di Sanità, Rome; <sup>3</sup>Istituto DOXA, Gallup International Association, Milan; <sup>4</sup>Istituto di Statistica Medica e Biometria "G.A. Maccacaro", Università degli Studi di Milano, Milan, Italy

---

### ABSTRACT

---

**Aims and background.** One of the strategies to control tobacco is to limit purchase of cigarettes to minors. To understand the attitudes of Italian adults towards regulations to prevent minors from purchasing tobacco products, we added specific questions to the annual survey on smoking in Italy.

**Methods.** During March-April 2007, we conducted a survey on smoking on 3,057 subjects representative of the Italian population aged  $\geq 15$  years. Two specific questions were included, one investigating the attitudes towards the proposed legislation prohibiting purchase of tobacco to individuals under 18 years of age (instead of 16 years) as a policy to reduce smoking prevalence and consumption. The second question asked whether the current tobacco sales-to-minors law was observed.

**Results.** Overall, 78% of Italians believed that a restriction of the current tobacco sales-to-minors law could be moderately to extremely effective as a strategy to decrease smoking prevalence and consumption. More than 90% of Italians reported that they had never seen in their lifetime a retailer refusing to sell cigarettes to an adolescent or requesting the minor's identification or age.

**Conclusions.** A restriction of the legislation, increasing to 18 years the minimum age for purchasing tobacco, would limit access to tobacco products by minors, only if adopted together with systematic and effective enforcement measures.

---

**Key words:** Italy, minors, population survey, tobacco smoking.

*Acknowledgments:* This work was conducted with the contribution of the Italian Ministry of Health, the Italian League Against Cancer and the Italian Association for Cancer Research. The work of this paper was undertaken while CLV was a Senior Fellow at the IARC.

*Correspondence to:* Silvano Gallus, ScD, Istituto di Ricerche Farmacologiche "Mario Negri", Via Giuseppe La Masa 19, 20156 Milan, Italy. Tel +39-02-39014657; fax +39-02-33200231; e-mail gallus@marionegri.it

Received July 24, 2008;  
accepted September 17, 2008.