

For the record, my name is Trey Williams, a Resident Physician in the department of Pediatrics at the Vermont Children's Hospital and also a Captain in the USAF Reserves.

In 2009, the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act directed the FDA to convene a panel of experts to conduct a study on the public health implications of raising the minimum age to purchase tobacco products. At the FDA's request, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) convened a committee in 2013 for this purpose. What you have before you is a brief of that report, published roughly a year ago.

There are 2 things I want to discuss today, one being an argument I have heard thus far in regards to raising the minimum legal age to purchase tobacco, as well as how raising the age can be beneficial.

Argument that "those who can go to war should be able to choose"

- This argument necessitates one of two things: either a discussion about lowering the MLA for alcohol- which we aren't doing currently because it is recognized as a public health problem or re-evaluating our age of military qualification- unlikely to happen.
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- Tobacco is an interesting consumer product in that if used as intended, causes documentable harm.
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- Why do we tell adolescents and 18 year olds that they must wait until they are 21 to use a substance that, if used properly, can be safe?
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- In fact, this argument contradicts itself. Anecdotally, as a member of the military and as someone who went to a military college, I know many of my college classmates age 18 that joined the military (either out of impulse, opportunity, or scholarship), but regretted it several years later (at graduation time), supporting the conclusion that decisions made at that age are often not completely thought out (and that a large portion don't know what they're getting themselves into), which you could argue is the same with tobacco.
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- A large number of people feel the same way about smoking several years after starting, but given it's addictive effects find it incredibly hard to quit.
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- Just as alcohol is considered a public health problem and the age was raised to 21, tobacco should be considered a public health problem- we need to realize that there are both short-term and latent effects of tobacco and not just latent effects
- Not only a public health problem, but a huge financial burden. Financial benefits from decreased use in healthcare costs- actual money saved for the state instead of profits for big tobacco

But enough about the right to choose, who is smoking and what good will raising the age do?

Who's smoking and when they're starting

- 90% report first use of cigarettes by 19 years of age (almost 100% before age 26), and they get it from other high schoolers and family members
- Raising the age would shift this- As most underage users rely on family and friends in similar circles to get tobacco, raising the age to 21 means those who can legally purchase tobacco aren't in the same social networks

- Delaying initiation will decrease the prevalence of tobacco users in the United States, as was seen in the two models used by the Institute of Medicine (SimSmoke and CISNET). It follows that the same would apply here in Vermont.
- **\*\* (Raising the MLA, based on the IOM models used, would decrease smoking prevalence by 12%)\*\*** It follows that the same would apply here in Vermont.
- If prevalence decreased, it also follows that disease burden and downstream effects of both active and passive smoking (i.e. Second-hand smoke) would decrease, decreasing the amount of money we are spending on such complications. (Premature births, stillbirths, growth restriction, Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), nicotine withdrawal in infants, heart and lung disease, cancer)

Three out of 4 American adults—including 7 in 10 cigarette smokers—favor raising the minimum age of sale for all tobacco products to 21, according to an article by CDC published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine.



Alabama, Alaska, New Jersey and Utah have the minimum age of sale is 19. One state—Hawaii—currently prohibits sales of tobacco products to youth under the age of 21.

Vermont is regularly regarded as one of the healthiest states, paving a path for other states to follow. Let's continue to be an example of health and raise the age. Thank you.