

Additives add to the health hazards of cigarettes – Sixteen European countries jointly warn about this

The tobacco industry uses a large number of additives to increase the attractiveness of cigarettes. The PITOC (Public Information on Tobacco Control) project informs the public about the substances used and their impact on health. PITOC has been jointly developed by the German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ) and the Netherlands National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM). On September 13, as part of this project, sixteen European countries will launch websites educating the public about the manifold effects of tobacco additives.

Additives can make cigarettes more attractive by suppressing several of the undesired effects that arise when inhaling tobacco smoke. Some are used to cover the bitter and harsh smell and taste of inhaled smoke. Others reduce the irritating effect of tobacco smoke on the respiratory tract so that the body's warning signal of its harmfulness is silenced. Yet others give a white color to ash and smoke or make the cigarette look nicer.

The newly launched websites now offer easily understandable, objective information about the mechanisms of fourteen selected cigarette additives and their impact on health. The additives covered include sugar, liquorice, cocoa, menthol, vanilla, cellulose, and glycerol – substances which cigarette manufacturers deliberately add to tobacco to make cigarettes more attractive.

Vanilla, for example, is added to tobacco, cigarette paper, or filters to cover the harsh taste of tobacco smoke. "Tobacco additives make it easier to take up smoking and they make it harder to quit because product properties are more pleasant," warns Dr. Martina Pötschke-Langer, head of the Division of Cancer Prevention at the German Cancer Research Center. "This makes hazardous products even more hazardous." Moreover, burning of many of these additives produces a host of chemicals including substances which have been classified as carcinogenic by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) in Lyon.

To sum up, tobacco additives have a substantial impact on public health by making health-hazardous products more attractive. Smoking is a major cause in the development of cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and respiratory diseases. In Europe, nearly 700,000 people die each year from the consequences of smoking; in Germany alone it is 110,000 people.

The countries involved in the PITOC project:

The Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, Estonia, Malta, Austria, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Norway, France, Finland, Turkey and Switzerland.

Please find the English websites on the PITOC project at:

http://www.dkfz.de/de/tabakkontrolle/PITOC_Additives_in_Tobacco_Products.html

The German Cancer Research Center (Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum, DKFZ) with its more than 2,500 employees is the largest biomedical research institute in Germany. At DKFZ, more than 1,000 scientists investigate how cancer develops, identify cancer risk factors and endeavor to find new strategies to prevent people from getting cancer. They develop novel approaches to make tumor diagnosis more precise and treatment of cancer patients more successful. Jointly with Heidelberg University Hospital, DKFZ has established the National Center for Tumor Diseases (NCT) Heidelberg where promising approaches from cancer research are translated into the clinic. The staff of the Cancer Information Service (KID) offers information about the widespread disease of cancer for patients, their families, and the general public. The center is a member of the

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