



*« Le droit de respirer un air de qualité non pollué par les émanations toxiques du tabac est aussi légitime que celui de disposer d'une eau potable. »*

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Geneva, 29 January 2015

### **Request for retraction of two papers published on UZH website**

Dear Prof. Dr Hengartner,

On behalf of my association, OxyRomandie, I am writing to you to request the retraction of the following two papers which are published on the website of the University of Zürich:

- Kaul A and Wolf M. The (Possible) Effect of Plain Packaging on the Smoking Prevalence of Minors in Australia: A Trend Analysis. University of Zurich Department of Economics Working Paper Series. May 2014; Available from: <http://www.econ.uzh.ch/static/workingpapers.php?id=828>
- Kaul A and Wolf M. The (Possible) Effect of Plain Packaging on Smoking Prevalence in Australia: A Trend Analysis. University of Zurich Department of Economics Working Paper, June 2014. Series. Available from: <http://www.econ.uzh.ch/static/workingpapers.php?id=844>

You will see in the Annex the list of errors which we have identified with these two papers. They are extremely serious. Taken individually, most of them are sufficient to invalidate the findings of the papers. Collectively, they are damning. We also document in the Annex some serious issues which throw further doubt about the credibility and integrity of the science involved in their preparation.

The publication of these two papers, which were funded and supervised by tobacco multinational Philip Morris, occurs at a critical time when a number of countries are considering the adoption of plain packaging, a smoking prevention measure recommended by the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control<sup>1</sup>. A few days ago, the UK Government announced that it would proceed with plain packaging legislation and a vote will be taken in the UK parliament before May of this year.

The tobacco multinationals present these two papers as key pieces of scientific evidence that plain packaging is not effective, in their effort to counter the public health policy of these countries. They take advantage of the authority conferred to these papers by the fact that they are published by the University of Zürich. For instance, in its response to the UK Department of

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<sup>1</sup> The WHO/FCTC is a UN treaty dedicated to public health, which currently comprises 180 Parties

Health's consultation on the introduction of regulations for standardised packaging of tobacco products, Japan Tobacco International refers to these studies as "studies by the Universities of Zürich and Saarland."

As long as the two papers remains on the website of the University of Zürich, the tobacco multinationals will continue to argue that these papers receive the endorsement of your academic institution.

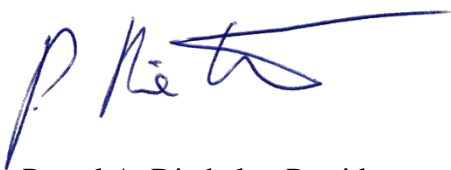
We do not ask that these papers be retracted because we do not like their conclusions. We ask the University of Zürich to retract them because they are erroneous beyond repair and because, dealing with an important subject in public health, they interfere with the public health policy of other countries, with consequences that could affect the health of millions of people. We are simply asking the University to assume its responsibility in this matter.

The seven critical errors which we have noted – and our attempt was to be as exhaustive as possible – could be explained by the sort of errors that sometimes creep into papers. However, we must observe that these errors are not randomly distributed but they all go in the same direction, towards reinforcing the conclusion of a lack of evidence, i.e. they all play in favour of the commercial interest of the financial sponsor. Thus, at the 5% level of significance, one can presume the existence of a bias – conscious or not – by the authors.

We think that the above raises the fundamental question of the integrity of science. The University of Zürich should not let the tobacco industry corrupt science and should protect itself against those who want to take advantage of its influence and reputation, not hesitating to put science at the service of money and not heeding the mission entrusted to this public institution, a mission which consists in particular in disseminating a culture founded on scientific knowledge and raising public awareness of the responsibilities that teachers assume towards society.

On behalf of OxyRomandie, I am urging the University of Zürich to retract the above two papers and issue a media release explaining the reasons for the retraction.

With my best regards,



Pascal A. Diethelm, President