

# International Tobacco Accountability Bulletin

News, Updates and Analyses of Issues Related to International Tobacco

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## Philip Morris External Research Program

to buy legitimacy, avoid responsibility for the global epidemic of tobacco-related disease, and thwart effective tobacco control legislation worldwide, Philip Morris last year launched a “new” External Research Program.

### More of the same from Philip Morris

The Philip Morris External Research Program administers grants to scientists for research on topics such as genetic susceptibility to cancers, non-tobacco causes of cardiovascular diseases, and factors, e.g. microorganisms, behind asthma.

This is a reincarnation of the tobacco industry controlled Center for Indoor Air Research (CIAR), which funded dozens of researchers during the 1990s. CIAR officially closed in 1998, stipulation of the Multi-State Agreement.

PMERP and CIAR share the same address, the same director (Max Eisenberg), the same industry control over the research that gets funded, and many of the same research objectives. Additionally, over half of the peer reviewers and several members of the Scientific Advisory Board listed on the program’s RFA 2000 were once recipients of CIAR funding. Many also served as peer reviewers for CIAR.

Internal tobacco industry documents indicate that Philip Morris used CIAR to divert attention away from the dangers of secondhand smoke, and that the company was eager to expand the successful strategy around the world.

### Global Scientific Agenda

In the late 1980s, Philip Morris had already launched campaigns outside the U.S. to block tobacco control legislation. An “Environmental Tobacco Smoke” tobacco industry project in Europe sought to persuade scientists, regulatory authorities and the general public that “health aims by anti-smoking forces concerning ETS are boundless.” (Philip Morris, Bates: 2501474271/4277)

The program spawned conferences, media appearances, litigation testimony, numerous publications, and research that supported the industry’s objectives to undermine the conclusions of legitimate scientific research on the hazards of second-hand smoke. Industry documents indicate an interest in extending the program into Asia and examining

such topics as “general air quality problems in warm climates.”

In response to the 1992 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency report which identified secondhand smoke as a Group A human carcinogen, Philip Morris stepped up efforts to control scientific investigations in the U.S. and around the world by launching a corporate “sound science” movement. One of the company’s goals was to rewrite epidemiological standards, so as to benefit the industry’s interests. CIAR was and PMERP now is, a key element of this strategy (*Constructing “Sound Science” and “Good Epidemiology”*: Tobacco, Lawyers, and Public Relations Firms, by Elisa K. Ong and Stanton A. Glantz, American Journal of Public Health, November 2001)

### Targeting International Researchers

Included on PMERP’s 2000 RFA list of peer reviewers and Scientific Advisory Board members are researchers from Japan, China, Italy, UK, and Germany. And in 2001, the program aggressively recruited applicants for grants and postdoctoral fellowships outside the U.S., in countries such as Turkey, Spain, and Israel.

Philip Morris has never had an interest in scientific research to promote health. The External Research Program is just another of the industry’s sophisticated attempts to further a corporate definition of “sound science,” to paint itself as “reformed,” and to forestall meaningful regulations.

For more information on the Philip Morris External Research Program, see:

<http://www.essentialaction.org/tobacco/action/pmpr.html>

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Editors: Robert Weissman & Anna White

P.O. Box 19405

Washington, D.C. 20036

Tel: 202-387-8030 ♦ Fax: 202-234-5176

Email: [rob@essential.org](mailto:rob@essential.org)

[www.essentialaction.org/itab](http://www.essentialaction.org/itab)