

Katherine Clegg Smith, PhD; Kevin Welding, PhD; Sejal Saraf, MPH; Carmen Washington, MPH; Michael Iacobelli, MPH; Joanna Cohen, PhD

## Background

- India is the world's #3 for tobacco production and #2 for consumption
- Smokeless tobacco (SLT) consumption is high. 24% of Indian men and 17% of women use SLT. 15% of Indian men and 1% of women smoke cigarettes or bidis
- In 2016, India increased the size of HWL to 85% of two principal displays for all tobacco products

## Objective

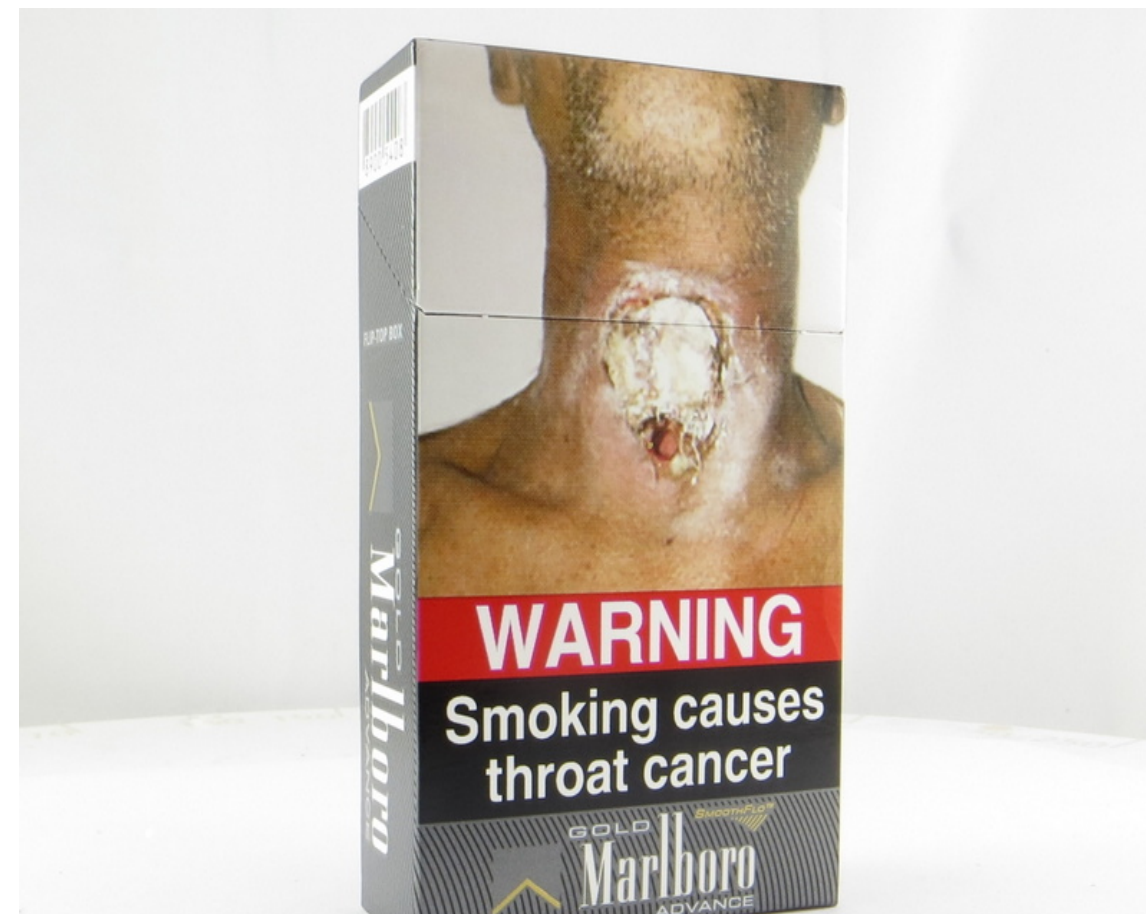
To assess HWL compliance and product appeals for cigarettes, bidis and smokeless tobacco.

## Methods

- In 2016, a systematic protocol was used to collect unique cigarettes, bidis and SLT packages from four Indian cities: Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai and Bengaluru
- Packs double coded for HWL compliance and appeal
- To assess compliance, we used four indicator variables:



- Warning location
- Warning size
- HWL elements
- Language



- To evaluate brand appeals, we used a common codebook for textual and imagery elements on packaging
- For SLT and bidis, we noted appeals not seen on cigarettes in India or other countries. We coded SLT and bidis for presence of individuals

226 unique packs were collected and coded:  
94 cigarettes, 47 bidis and 85 SLT

## Results

### Compliance with Health Warning Label Law

#### HWL compliance by product type

Product (n)	Number of packs with HWL	Compliant HWL n (%)
Cigarettes (n=94)	55 (59%)	29 (53%)
Bidis (n=47)	43 (91%)	0 (0%)
Smokeless (n=85)	54 (64%)	1 (2%)

Compliance challenges include split warnings and packaging shape



#### Additional health warning label issues

Variation in the printing quality, size and graphic magnification



## Marketing Appeals



- 55% of SLT have 'fancy features'
- 23% of bidis and 42% of SLT make a luxury or quality claim



- Pack shape innovation (deeply beveled edges) increases branding potential on main package panel
- 83% of bidis and 35% of SLT had depictions of individuals on packaging, which has not been seen elsewhere



## Conclusions

- There is poor compliance with HWL laws for all tobacco products, particularly SLT and bidis
- Although the Indian law aligns well with the WHO-FCTC guidelines, implementation deficits limit policy benefits
- The marketing on Indian SLT is often appealing in terms of shininess, bright colors and vivid designs
- There are unique brand appeals on smokeless and bidi products that deserve greater consideration, particularly the use of individual portraits on packaging
- The depiction of children and even young babies on smokeless products is particularly concerning

**Acknowledgements:** This work was supported with funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies' Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use (bloomberg.org)

We would like to thank our Indian data collection team, Healix Sekhsaria Institute for Public Health