CVS stops selling tobacco, offers quit-smoking programs

(by Jayne O’Donnell and Laura Ungar, USA Today)

**Text Rendering**

Highlight 3 words YELLOW that stand out to you, that you don’t know, or that you like.

Highlight 3 phrases GREEN that support the author’s idea.

Highlight the author’s thesis BLUE; his/her main idea

CVS Caremark [will] stop selling tobacco products in all of its stores starting Wednesday – a move health experts hope will be followed by other major drugstore chains.

CVS announced in February that it planned to drop tobacco by Oct. 1 as the sales conflicted with its health care mission. To bolster its image as a health care company, CVS will announce a corporate name change to CVS Health. Retail stores will still be called CVS/Pharmacy.

CVS, which has 7,700 retail locations, is the second-largest drugstore chain in the USA, behind Walgreens. It manages the pharmacy benefits for 65 million members and has 900 walk-in medical clinics.

The American Pharmacists Association called on drugstores to stop selling tobacco in March 2010 and several small, independent chains have done so, APA spokeswoman Michelle Spinnler says. CVS is the first large chain to stop tobacco sales. …

CVS is also launching a smoking-cessation campaign that will include an assessment of the smoker’s “readiness to quit,” education, medication support to help curb the desire to use tobacco and coaching to help people stay motivated and avoid relapses.

CVS says research shows its decision will have a big impact. A study the company is releasing Wednesday in the journal *Health Affairs*shows bans at pharmacies in Boston and San Francisco led to more than 13% fewer purchasers. Smokers didn’t just switch where they bought cigarettes and other tobacco products, some stopped buying them altogether. About 900 households in the two cities recorded everything they bought after the bans went into effect.

Troyen Brennan, CVS’ chief medical officer, says if the results were extrapolated for pharmacies across the USA, it would lead to 65,000 fewer deaths a year.

Ellen Hahn of the Tobacco Policy Research Program at the University of Kentucky says one chain not selling tobacco will have a limited effect, and other tobacco control strategies, such as price and tax increases and smoking bans, have been shown to be more effective. Still, she said, “every little bit helps because they are such a large chain. If every pharmacy would follow suit, that would be best. But this sends a clear message that pharmacies should not be selling tobacco.”

Audrey Silk, founder of Citizens Lobbying Against Smoker Harassment, or CLASH, a national smokers’ rights group based in New York City, says CVS has every right to change what it sells, but she believes the company is falling for the anti-smoking “crusade.”

Pharmacies no longer sell just medicines, she said, “they have turned into grocery stores. They sell candy. They sell beer. CVS Health? It’s a perception war. … Tobacco is legal. They’re engaging in public coercion by not selling cigarettes.”

CVS says its tobacco sales total about $2 billion a year.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) calls tobacco “the single most preventable cause of disease, disability and death in the United States,” saying 443,000 people die from smoking or exposure to secondhand smoke each year.

Tobacco deaths are very personal to two top CVS executives. CEO Larry Merlo’s father died of tobacco-related cancer at age 57 and the mother of CVS/Pharmacy President Helene Foulkes died five years ago of lung cancer from smoking.

After its announcement in February, Foulkes says CVS was deluged with personal stories from customers who had quit smoking. Many said it was the “hardest thing they had ever done,” she says. The company is determined to make it easier for them, she says, because it simply makes sense.

“The contradiction of selling tobacco was becoming a growing obstacle to playing a bigger role in health care delivery,” Merlo says.

QUESTIONS ON NEXT PAGE

QUESTIONS:

1. The first paragraph of a news article should answer the questions who, what, where and when. List the who, what, where and when of this news item. (NOTE: The remainder of a news article provides details on the why and/or how.)

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1. Why has CVS made this decision? Be specific.

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1. What is CVS doing in its stores to try to help people quit smoking?

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1. Should a private company be able to choose which legal products it sells or refuses to sell? Explain your answer.

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