

Public Health Advocacy and Tobacco Control: Making Smoking History

By Simon Chapman. Published by Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2007. Paperback. 324 pages with index. ISBN 9781405161633.

Reviewed by Trevor Shilton, Heart Foundation

Public Health Advocacy and Tobacco Control is an authoritative, thorough and practical publication presenting the challenges and issues in tobacco control while applying the principles of public health advocacy and providing a comprehensive menu of solutions to tobacco control. Chapman gives an account of the recent history, in Australia and in other countries, that has embraced and advanced comprehensive approaches to tobacco control. These countries demonstrate a compelling case study of the power and efficacy of advocacy. At the same time, Chapman points out that the 10 million deaths a year attributed to the global tobacco epidemic will be largely played out in developing nations. This text also provides an authoritative and potent menu and guide for advocates living in those nations whose tobacco control record is in need of agitation and improvement.

Chapman is an author whose credibility and experience in 'treading the turf' between the science and art of public health advocacy is second to none. He is able to articulate the science while stressing that advocacy has ensured the conclusions of scientists are translated into policy, mass media programs and law reforms. Ultimately, it is the combination of legislation, regulation and mass-reach programs that have made a difference at the population level. Chapman presents the key advocacy arguments while embellishing them with a fascinating range of examples of effective advocacy practice. The key to this, emphasised throughout the book, is the importance of understanding the media and having a presence in media discourse. Chapman is expert at capturing the 'sound bites' that, in turn, capture media, public and consequently, political attention. Inherent in this, Chapman states, is the core advocacy skills of framing, persuasion and news making. For example, Chapman refers to the tobacco industry as the 'vector' of disease, the rogue or 'bad apple' fully deserving tough controls and regulation.

The book is divided into two sections. The first covers what needs to be done to arrest smoking and the diseases it causes. It spans topics such as the place of advocacy in tobacco control, characteristics of public awareness campaigns and interventions that work, ethical issues, smoking cessation and prevention, harm reduction and product regulation and the

denormalisation of smoking. Refreshing in part one is that the author pulls no punches in regard to tobacco control that fails to meet the criterion for 'effectiveness'. Principally, this is the impact of these prevention measures at the population level.

Part two outlines the 'how' of tobacco control, the strategies and tactics that have succeeded in keeping tobacco issues in the public and political eye as a priority issue, deserving of appropriate regulations, laws and funding. The second section provides an A-Z of tobacco control advocacy strategy – a detailed and user-friendly menu for how to make it happen. For the practitioner or policy maker alike part two also provides a highly useful workbook on how to conduct effective tobacco control advocacy. It provides a thousand examples of how to bring to life, and apply, Chapman's metaphor of the tobacco industry being 'pecked to death by a thousand ducks'.

While the focus of the book is tobacco control advocacy, it is a valuable text with relevance to those who have a broader interest in public health advocacy. Tobacco control has made many advances due to effective advocacy. In these advances are lessons to be learned by those who advocate for other public health issues – and no-one is better able to 'teach the class' than Simon Chapman.

Public Health Advocacy and Tobacco Control is a wonderful articulation of the importance of advocacy as a serious and fundamental strategy in public health.