



# You know . . .

Lynn T. Kozlowski, Ph.D.



October 26, 2017



**You know  
smokeless tobacco is  
'not safe.'**



University at Buffalo

Department of Community  
Health and Health Behavior

School of Public Health and Health Professions

**About 10 out of 10  
Americans know  
smokeless tobacco is not  
safe.**

**Common sense,  
common knowledge,  
and  
the government tells us so.**



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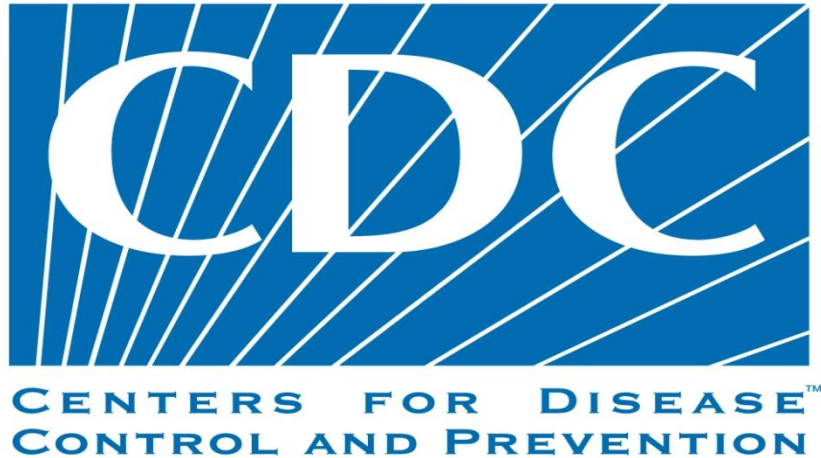
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# 1986 to present



**“This product is not a safe alternative to cigarettes.”**

# October 2017



**“There is no  
safe  
tobacco  
product.”**

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/toolstemplates/entertainmentd/tips/lungcancer.html>



**\$36 million**

**SMOKELESS DOESN'T  
MEAN HARMLESS**

[https://therealcost.betobaccofree.hhs.gov/sites/all/themes/fcb\\_bootstrap/images/masthead/dip\\_masthead\\_Mobile\\_flipped\\_320x108.jpg](https://therealcost.betobaccofree.hhs.gov/sites/all/themes/fcb_bootstrap/images/masthead/dip_masthead_Mobile_flipped_320x108.jpg)

# But



# 9 of 10 adults unaware that smokeless tobacco is less harmful than cigarettes\*

**Public =**



\*e.g., Kiviniemi & Kozlowski, *Harm Reduction Journal*, 2015,  
12:21 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12954-015-0055-0>

[https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=FfsLzucv&id=15039D3E2E0BBF12549FDB7DB0C601FE090B56E7&thid=OIP.FfsLzucvPfiCU6ifuY0rXgCiDy&q=blindfolded+man&simid=608001606611632616&selectedIndex=7&qft=+filterui%3alicense-L2\\_L3\\_L5\\_L6](https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=FfsLzucv&id=15039D3E2E0BBF12549FDB7DB0C601FE090B56E7&thid=OIP.FfsLzucvPfiCU6ifuY0rXgCiDy&q=blindfolded+man&simid=608001606611632616&selectedIndex=7&qft=+filterui%3alicense-L2_L3_L5_L6)

**Yet the government may have done  
more to foster this ignorance  
than to correct it.**

## Smokeless Tobacco and Cancer

### ON THIS PAGE

Is using smokeless tobacco less hazardous than smoking cigarettes?

(**Accessed October 17, 2017** [Reviewed October 25, 2010])

<https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/tobacco/smokeless-fact-sheet#q6>

**But NCI ignores its direct question and instead answers forms of the “Is it safe?” question.**

**“ . . . all tobacco products are harmful  
. . . . There is no safe level of tobacco use”**

(Accessed Sept 20, 2017 [Reviewed October 25, 2010])

But NCI ignores the direct question and instead answers forms of the “Is it safe?” question.

“ . . . **all tobacco products are harmful**  
 . . . . **There is no safe level of tobacco use**”

(Accessed Sept 20, 2017 [Reviewed October 25, 2010])



# 12 years ago, we thought:



**"Not safe" is not enough: smokers have a right to know more than there is no safe tobacco product**

L T Kozlowski and B Q Edwards

***Tobacco Control* 2005; 14;3-7.**

**But now we know that 'not safe' is  
not only 'not enough,' it is  
is misleading!**

**When consumers hear ‘not safe,’  
many interpret it as meaning ‘not  
safer’ than smoking—**

**as shown in NIH and FDA funded research in  
peer-reviewed journals.**



# Example 1

“Several thought that [“This product is not a safe alternative to cigarettes”] suggested . . . that although some might think SLT is less harmful than cigarettes, it is really not, . . . .

**Several thought it gave the impression that SLT is just as harmful as cigarettes.” (p. 673).**

- Wackowski, O. A., Lewis, M. J., & Delnevo, C. D. (2015). Interviews with smokers about smokeless tobacco products, risk messages and news articles. *Tobacco Control*. Nov;25(6):671-678. doi: 10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2015-052412.
- **Funding from the National Cancer Institute and the FDA Center for Tobacco Products (R03CA175901)**

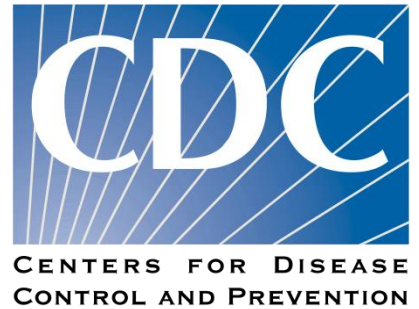
# Example 2

Some respondents actually pointed to the “not a safe alternative” warning label as supporting evidence that smokeless and cigarettes were equally harmful.

- Liu, S. T., Nemeth, J. M., Klein, E. G., Ferketich, A. K., Kwan, M. P., & Wewers, M. E. (2015). Risk perceptions of smokeless tobacco among adolescent and adult users and nonusers. *J Health Commun, 20*, 599-606.
- **Senior author is the co-director of the Ohio State U. FDA-NIH Center of Excellence in Regulatory Tobacco Science**

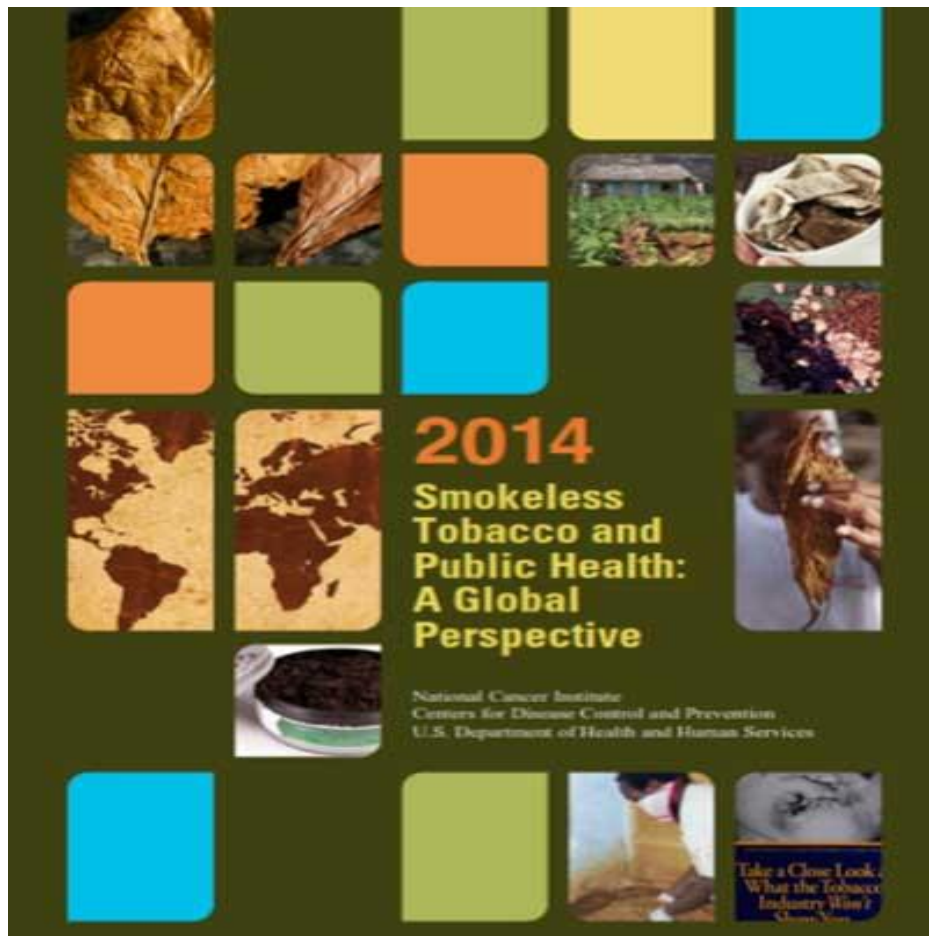
# **What's wrong with the public thinking that smokeless tobacco is just as harmful as cigarettes?**

- It is far from true!
- And many consumers already use more than one tobacco product.



U.S. officials for the past 31 years have focused on the “smokeless is not safe” issue and estimates of harms from smokeless, **but they have not reported quantitatively how much less harmful smokeless tobacco is than cigarettes.**





## NCI, CDC Review in 2014

Editors:

Dorothy Hatsukami,

Mitch Zeller,

Prakash Gupta,

Mark Parascandola,

Samira Asma

**In 447 pages no direct  
quantitative assessment  
of the differential risks  
between smokeless and  
cigarettes!**

**12 years ago American Cancer Society experts wrote in light of their own massive research:**

**“. . . the hazards associated . . . . with [smokeless tobacco] in this and other studies . . . *are considerably smaller* than the risks associated with cigarettes” (p. 356)**

- (Henley, S. J., Thun, M. J., Connell, C., & Calle, E. E. (**2005**). Two large prospective studies of mortality among men who use snuff or chewing tobacco (United States). *Cancer Causes and Control*, 16(4), 347-358.

# But they reported no estimate of the degree of differential harms

For example,

all-cause mortality from cigarettes = X

all-cause mortality from smokeless = Y

## **The authors seem to explain by writing:**

“ . . . . we do not agree . . . . that spit tobacco should be marketed as a less hazardous alternative to smoking.”





Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

## Addictive Behaviors

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/addictbeh](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/addictbeh)



### Commentary

Do not damn tobacco users to ignorance about big differences in deadly products because you disapprove of the 'bus' they are on

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<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0306460317301478>

**‘Not safe’ messages may seem ‘safe,’ true,  
factual statements to legal departments.**

**But experts in the science of communication ('pragmatics') know that the literal words are only the beginning of a health communication.**

**Recipients of messages make inferences about what is intended by the communicator.**

MacGregor, D. G., Slovic, P., & Malmfors, T. (1999). "How Exposed Is Exposed Enough?" Lay Inferences About Chemical Exposure. *Risk Analysis*, 19, 649-659.

# Conclusion

- ‘Not safe’ messages *on their own* mislead consumers about material facts.
- This has been going on for over 3 decades, needs to stop, and these ill-effects on health literacy need to be reduced by ‘corrective statements’ from the authorities.



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# Corrective statement

- The F\_\_ [fill in the letters] does not recommend the use of any tobacco product because all tobacco products are harmful, but consumers should know that cigarettes are the most harmful tobacco product and the harms from smokeless tobacco products are considerably smaller than the harms caused by cigarettes.
- For information on what is known about the harms from cigarettes compared to smokeless go to our website [give hyperlink].



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Commentary

**Young or adult users of multiple tobacco/nicotine products urgently need to be informed of meaningful differences in product risks**



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# MISLEADING GOVERNMENTAL RISK COMMUNICATION: THE EXAMPLE OF SMOKELESS TOBACCO

Thank you for your attention.

By

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Professor

Community Health and Health Behavior

