
Tobacco Free Mass

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Statement of Dr. Alan Woodward
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Framingham, MA – Today CVS Caremark became a national leader in putting public health before profits. The retail pharmacy giant announced plans to remove all tobacco products from their shelves in over 7,600 stores nationwide by October 1, 2014. Tobacco Free Mass applauds CVS's leadership in taking this bold step in promoting health.

Tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable premature death and disease in this country. Cigarette smoking causes more than 480,000 deaths per year and numerous chronic diseases, costing the US nearly \$176 billion to treat annually.^{1,2} As key players in the health care system, pharmacies should be striving to improve the health of their customers, rather than profiting from selling cigarettes and other tobacco products that cause death and disease. Tobacco Free Mass is thrilled that CVS agrees. And with the recent release of the Surgeon General's Report reconfirming the health consequences of smoking and calling on all of us to play our part to reduce tobacco use even further, what perfect timing?

While we have made great strides in reducing tobacco use from 42 percent in 1964 to 18 percent today, there is a lot more we ought to do to further reduce the toll of cigarette smoking and tobacco use. CVS's decision will clearly have a critical effect because it will further reduce access to cigarettes and will send the message, particularly to youth, that cigarette use is neither healthy nor socially acceptable. And, while we have been waiting more than 40 years since the American Pharmacist Association's 1971 position calling on pharmacies to remove tobacco products from pharmacy chains to act, CVS has laid down the gauntlet for other pharmacy chains to follow suit. It is our sincere hope that Walgreens, Rite Aid, Walmart, Stop & Shop, and other retailers with pharmacies make will make the same decision on behalf of the health of their customers.

Tobacco Free Mass thanks CVS for its leadership and for being a key organizational partner in this effort.

To learn more visit www.tobaccofreemass.net. Tobacco Free Mass is a statewide coalition that advocates for policies to reduce tobacco use, help smokers quit, and reduce the public's exposure to secondhand smoke.

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¹ US Department of Health and Human Services. The health consequences of smoking – 50 years of progress: A Report of the Surgeon General; 2014.

² Massachusetts Tobacco Cessation and Prevention Program.

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/mtcp/> accessed May 2014.