

BACKGROUND: CANADIAN EXPERT PANEL ON TOBACCO SMOKE AND BREAST CANCER RISK

Historically, studies of the link between breast cancer and tobacco smoke have been inconclusive. Epidemiological evidence has been inconsistent, with some studies showing an association between tobacco smoke and breast cancer and others not. Newer studies have however, provided more evidence.

In order to enhance our understanding of the relationship between breast cancer and tobacco smoke, an international Expert Panel met in November 2008 under the auspices of the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit, an affiliate of the Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto. The Panel brought together leading experts from Canada and the United States to examine the growing body of literature that exists regarding the link between tobacco smoking and breast cancer.

The Expert Panel included six Canadian and five American scientists, with expertise in epidemiology, toxicology, genetics, measurement of tobacco smoke exposure and public health practice. Their goal was to assemble, analyze and evaluate all existing evidence to answer four questions:

1. What is the nature of the relationship between tobacco smoke and breast cancer?
2. Is it possible to measure how many breast cancer cases and deaths are linked to tobacco smoke?
3. What further research is needed to better understand the relationship between tobacco smoke and breast cancer?
4. What other comments does the Panel wish to make?

The Panel's findings are published in an April 2009 report called the *Canadian Expert Panel on Tobacco Smoke and Breast Cancer Risk*. After an in-depth review of all available scientific evidence regarding tobacco smoke and breast cancer, the Expert Panel concluded that non-smoking younger women are at increased risk for pre-menopausal breast cancer through exposure to second-hand smoke. They also concluded that active smoking increases the risk of both pre- and post-menopausal breast cancer

The Panel's report provides an up-to-date evaluation of the published evidence regarding active smoking, second-hand smoke and breast cancer. The last major reviews of active smoking considered data published only up until 2002. Since that time, extensive new scientific research has come to the fore, and this expert report is the first to include that crucial information.