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Cigarette Advertising in Germany and Japan: Cancer Research Centers of Both Countries Present Alarming Report

People in Germany and Japan are exposed to massive cigarette advertising every day – while shopping in supermarkets, shops and stores, at gas stations, on about 400,000 cigarette vending machines in both countries, in public transport waiting areas, in bars and restaurants and at leisure events. This is the result of a documentation on tobacco advertising presented by the German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ) and the National Cancer Center in Japan on the occasion of the World Health Summit 2011 in Berlin.

It is the first ever report in which scientists of both centers have compared the two countries and highlighted shared problems for public health. “The universal presence of cigarette advertising in Germany and Japan is causing considerable harm to public health in both countries,” says Dr. Martina Pötschke-Langer, head of the Division of Cancer Prevention at DKFZ and initiator of the documentation. “Tobacco advertising has an impact on the smoking behavior of children and adolescents, in particular, because they are much more susceptible to advertising than adults. And for smokers, too, it gets harder to quit when you are being tempted to smoke everywhere you go.”

The report, which is published in three languages, shows that advertising restrictions in Germany and Japan are insufficient – unlike in most other industrial countries worldwide. In the two countries, the tobacco industry still has abundant possibilities of promoting their harmful products.

Only a comprehensive ban on tobacco advertising of all kinds will protect the public and, in particular, children and young people from the negative effects of cigarette advertising. The World Health Organization (WHO) demands for such a comprehensive ban on all forms of tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship in its Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, FCTC). Germany and Japan have signed and ratified this convention, thereby committing themselves to introducing comprehensive advertising bans. Germany and Japan must take action now and turn their international commitments into national law – this is what both cancer research centers recommend.

The German Cancer Research Center (Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum, DKFZ), employing over 2,500 staff members, is the largest biomedical research institute in Germany. More than 1,000 scientists are working to investigate the mechanisms of cancer development, identify cancer risk factors and develop new strategies for better cancer prevention, more precise diagnosis and effective treatment of cancer patients. In addition, the staff of the Cancer Information Service (KID) provides information about this widespread disease for patients, their families, and the general public. DKFZ is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (90%) and the State of Baden-Wuerttemberg (10%) and is a member of the Helmholtz Association of National Research Centers.

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