

Chain Pharmacy: Policies¹

Numerous attempts have been made to secure copies of tobacco sales policies from the four major chains pharmacies in California. To date, none were willing to provide written policies addressing their tobacco sales and promotions. The following statements have been collected from interactions with chain store management.

Walgreens

According to a California South District Manager for Walgreens Corporation: "Walgreens doesn't promote or advertise tobacco products either in our stores or in our promotional materials."² Walgreens has verbally stated that all cigarettes are kept behind the counter; however they DO allow self-service display sales of chewing, pipe and loose tobacco.

Currently, there are three (3) individual California Walgreens stores that joined our *Proud to be Tobacco Free* Campaign; we understand these stores are possible "test markets" to determine how tobacco-free stores would fare financially.

Rite Aid

According to an Executive Vice President of Managed Care & Public Affairs for Rite Aid Corporation, the decision to sell tobacco products is dictated by Corporate Headquarters in Camp Hill, PA. Rite Aid corporate spokesperson Sarah Datz has said, "Our customers dictate our selling policy, and when you are in the retail business, you want to give people what they want."³

Rite Aid has shown the greatest increase in the number of stores that sell chewing and smokeless tobacco (10.1% increase), cigars (10.1% increase) and pipe or loose tobacco (11.6% increase). Out of all major California chains, Rite Aid has shown the smallest decrease (10.4%) in sales of tobacco from self-service display cases.⁴

Notably, there are NO individual Rite Aid stores registered with the *Proud to be Tobacco Free* Campaign.

Longs Drugs

According to a Longs Drug Store Vice President, all store managers can make the decision to sell tobacco products in their store. Because of this policy, local Longs Drugs would be most receptive to grass roots organizing and community opinion. Longs has shown the largest decrease in the number of stores that sell pipe or loose tobacco (25.6% decrease).⁴

There are currently four (4) Longs Drug Stores registered with the *Proud to be Tobacco Free* Campaign; at least 92% of their stores still sell tobacco.⁴

Albertsons/Sav-on

Sav-on pharmacies are most often located within Albertsons' grocery stores. While the pharmacy section might not sell tobacco, the grocery section usually sells and promotes tobacco; because of this fact, currently there are NO Sav-on Stores registered with the *Proud to be Tobacco Free* Campaign.⁴

Most of these chain representatives do not see their stores first and foremost as pharmacies, but rather as convenience stores (even though last year (2000) each chain made between 1.6 and 11.7 **BILLION** dollars from pharmacy sales)! They fully comprehend the horrific effects tobacco has on thousands of Californians every year, but they say they are providing a product that their customers want and expect to find on their shelves (even though, three quarters of smokers surveyed indicated that they **rarely** or **never** buy tobacco at drugstores)!

"The question goes beyond pharmacy and the question becomes, Why is it appropriate for any retailer, for the purpose of making more money, to sell a product that is known to cause harm to so many who purchase it?"⁵



Prescription for Change
June 2001

¹This fact sheet discusses policies and practices as they relate to the four largest chains in California: Longs Drugs, Walgreens, Sav-on, and Rite Aid.

² Stated by Lauren Cohen, Walgreens Corporation, February 22, 2001

³ "Drugstores Eye Tobacco Sales" CSNews Online, April 7, 2000

⁴ *Chain Drugstore Policies and Attitudes About Tobacco Sales and Promotions-Phase II*, Social Science Research Center, CSU Fullerton, June 2000

⁵ *Pharmacy Today*, "Pharmacy Should Not Let This Opportunity Go Up in Smoke," Dr. Daniel Hussar, October 2000

Chain Pharmacy: Practices¹

In 2000, Walgreen's sales from pharmacy was 55% or 11.7 billion dollars; 60% or 8.7 billion dollars of Rite Aid's sales were from pharmacy; 15% or 5.5 billion dollars of Sav-on's sales were from pharmacy and 41% or \$1.64 billion dollars of Longs Drugs sales were from pharmacy.²

More than 9 out of 10 chain pharmacies surveyed report selling tobacco products; yet almost three-quarters of SMOKERS surveyed report they "Rarely" or "Never" buy tobacco at drugstores!³

In 1998, *Drug Store News* reported that cigarettes/cigars/matches accounted for only 2.6% of all products sold on an average day in a chain pharmacy! Unfortunately, since 1998 NO data on tobacco product sales has been published in *Drug Store News*.⁴

Only 36% of chain pharmacies indicated that they display any "counter promotional" tobacco advertisements (encouraging customers to stop using tobacco products); yet ALL stores indicated having tobacco advertisements on display cases, shelves, cabinets, door signs, shopping baskets, checkout materials and promotional items.³

Leaders in the pharmacy industry agree, all pharmacies should stop the sale of tobacco products - Dr. Daniel A. Hussar, Editor in Chief of *Pharmacy Today* Magazine wrote an editorial urging all pharmacies to stop the sale of tobacco in their facilities. "...we must respond to the question of how our role as health care professionals can be reconciled with a role as suppliers of products that are known to be addictive, carcinogenic, and associated with numerous other medical problems."



Prescription for Change

June 2001

¹This fact sheet discusses policies and practices as they relate to the four largest chains in California: Longs Drugs, Walgreens, Sav-on, and Rite Aid.

² *Drug Store News*, 2001 Annual Report of the Chain Drug Industry, April 23, 2001

³ *Chain Drugstore Policies and Attitudes About Tobacco Sales and Promotions-Phase II*, Social Science Research Center, CSU Fullerton, June 2000

⁴ *Drug Store News*, September 7, 1998

⁵ *Pharmacy Today*, "Pharmacy Should Not Let This Opportunity Go Up in Smoke," Dr. Daniel Hussar, October 2000