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ABSTRACTS OF ORAL & POSTER PRESENTATIONS



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Tobacco industry interference on authorised officers for tobacco control in Sri Lanka

Perera N.C.S.¹, Abeyratne E.H.S.¹, Asantha W.A.J.B.¹, Dineshkumar P.¹, Nilaweera A.I.^{1,2,3}, Perera K.M.N.^{1,4}, Rajasuriya M.C.^{1,5}

¹Centre for Combating Tobacco, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka; ²Postgraduate Institute of Medicine, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka; ³Department of Allied Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka; ⁴Department of Public Health, Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka; ⁵Riverland General Hospital, Berri SA, Australia

Background: The National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol (NATA) Act No. 27 of 2006, is the legal framework for tobacco and alcohol control in Sri Lanka. Its enforcement is via four authorised officers: food and drug inspectors, public health inspectors (PHIs), police officers, and excise officers (EOs).

Aims: To explore forms of tobacco industry interference (TII) targeting authorised officers under the NATA Act and its potential implications for tobacco control in Sri Lanka

Methods: Investigative research methods were used. Data collection included seven key informant interviews of tobacco control stakeholders and content analysis of photographs, media reports, official websites and tobacco industry (TI) publications. Data were thematically analysed to identify patterns of industry engagement and implications.

Results: TII was reported related to PHIs, police and EOs. Direct sponsorships: PHI's trade union activities, construction and/or renovation of three police stations. Relationship-building activities of Ceylon Tobacco Company (CTC): Engaging a PHI in the trade loyalty programme "Abhisheka", providing training to EOs and continuous engagement through illicit trade reporting initiatives. Received high media coverage promoted the image of CTC, may contravene Section 35 of the NATA Act. Excise department's media statements repeatedly highlighted industry-favoured narratives and arguments (on taxation and illicit trade) to confuse the general public and policy makers.

Conclusions: It is clear that TI attempts to influence authorised officers of the NATA Act. Article 5.3 of Framework Convention on Tobacco Control should be implemented, establishing clear codes of conduct for public officials and mandatory disclosure of interactions with the TI, which are essential to protect tobacco control actions.

Key words: Law enforcement, Tobacco, Commercial determinants of health

Corresponding author email: chinthi29@yahoo.com