

NEWS FROM:

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**08 June 2011**

## **UCT PhD thesis investigates effects of tax increase, advertising ban on tobacco sales**

Evan Blecher's PhD thesis, *The economics of tobacco control in low- and middle-income countries*, investigates the effectiveness of excise tax increases and advertising restrictions to reduce tobacco consumption, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Many LMICs experience rapid economic growth, and over the past two decades, cigarettes have become more affordable in these countries. Blecher argues that excise tax increases on tobacco should be anchored on the affordability concept, rather than as a tax burden, as is currently the case, where excise tax is determined as a percentage of the retail price.

An increase in illicit trading in cigarettes can be a major obstacle to higher taxes. Using South Africa as a case study, the thesis finds that the illicit trade in cigarettes has not undermined tobacco control efforts. Blecher also tests the impact of advertising bans on a large cross-section of countries, including many LMICs. Advertising bans reduce consumption and are more effective in LMICs than in high-income countries. Partial advertising bans are not effective as a tobacco control tool. However, comprehensive advertising bans are effective.

Blecher was born and raised in Port Elizabeth. He holds a Bsc (Bus) (Sci) degree from the University of Cape Town and an MA from the University of the West of England. He has taught economics and health economics at UCT and currently works for the American Cancer Society in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. His supervisor is Associate Professor Corné van Walbeek in the Department of Economics at UCT. Blecher will receive his PhD degree on Thursday, 9 June 2011, at 15h00.

***ENDS***

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