

Here are two more messages from “The Health Consequences of Smoking - 50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General” a 1081-page document found at

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK179276/pdf/Bookshelf_NBK179276.pdf .

This is the message from Howard Koh, the then Assistant Secretary for Health:

“The nation stands poised at the crossroads of tobacco control. On one hand, we can celebrate tremendous progress 50 years after the landmark 1964 Surgeon General’s report: Smoking and Health. Adult smoking rates have fallen from about 43% (1965) to about 18% today. Mortality rates from lung cancer, the leading cause of cancer death in this country, are declining. Most smokers visiting health care settings are now routinely asked and advised about tobacco use. On the other hand, cigarette smoking remains the chief preventable killer in America, with more than 40 million Americans caught in a web of tobacco dependence. Each day, more than 3,200 youth (younger than 18 years of age) smoke their first cigarette and another 2,100 youth and young adults who are occasional smokers progress to become daily smokers. Furthermore, the range of emerging tobacco products complicates the current public health landscape. In this context, the 50th Anniversary of the Surgeon General’s report prompts us to pause and ask why this addiction persists when proven interventions can eliminate it. Of great concern, too many in our nation assume that past success in tobacco control guarantees future progress; nothing can be further from the truth. To rejuvenate and reinvigorate national efforts, in 2010, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services unveiled its first ever strategic plan for tobacco control. Ending the Tobacco Epidemic: A Tobacco Control Strategic Action Plan provides a critical framework to guide efforts to rapidly drop prevalence rates of smoking among youth and adults. A major foundation and pillar of the plan is to encourage and promote leadership throughout all sectors of society. Now, this current 2014 Surgeon General’s report can accelerate that leadership to fully implement the life-saving prevention that can make the next generation free of tobacco-related death and disease. We have many tools that we know work. A comprehensive public policy approach emphasizing mass media campaigns to encourage prevention and quit attempts, smokefree policies, restrictions on youth access to tobacco products, and price increases can collectively drive further meaningful reductions in tobacco use. Furthermore, we can accelerate progress through full commitment to clinical and public health advances; including the widespread use of telephone quit lines and science-based counseling and medications for tobacco users. Promoting progress today also requires recognizing that tobacco use has evolved from being an equal-opportunity killer to one threatening the most vulnerable members of our society. We must confront, and reverse, the tragically higher tobacco use rates that threaten persons of low socioeconomic status, sexual minorities, high school dropouts, some racial/ ethnic minority groups, and those living with mental illness and substance use disorders. Of all the accomplishments of the 20th century, historians rank the 1964 Surgeon General’s report as one of the seminal public health achievements of our time. Armed with both science and resolve, we can continue to honor the legacy of the report by completing the work it began in the last century. The current 2014 Surgeon General’s report represents a national vision for getting the job done. With strategy, commitment, and action, our nation can leave the crossroads and move forward to end the tobacco epidemic once and for all.”

And the FORWARD from the Surgeon General's Report written by the then Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Thomas R. Frieden, M.D., M.P.H.

"Foreword Fifty years have passed since publication of the landmark report of the Surgeon General's Advisory Committee on smoking and health. This report highlights both the dramatic progress our nation has made reducing tobacco use and the continuing burden of disease and death caused by smoking. As a physician, when I think about smoking, I recall the patients I have cared for. The man who had a leg amputated. The woman who had to gasp for every single breath that she took. The man with heart disease who hoped to see his son graduate, but didn't live long enough to do so. That's the reality of smoking that health care providers see every day. The prevalence of current cigarette smoking among adults has declined from 42% in 1965 to 18% in 2012. However, more than 42 million Americans still smoke. Tobacco has killed more than 20 million people prematurely since the first Surgeon General's report in 1964. The findings in this report show that the decline in the prevalence of smoking has slowed in recent years and that burden of smoking-attributable mortality is expected to remain at high and unacceptable levels for decades to come unless urgent action is taken. Recent surveys monitoring trends in tobacco use indicate that more people are using multiple tobacco products, particularly youth and young adults. The percentage of U.S. middle and high school students who use electronic, or e-cigarettes, more than doubled between 2011 and 2012. We need to monitor patterns of use of an increasingly wide array of tobacco products across all of the diverse segments of our society, particularly because the tobacco industry continues to introduce and market new products that establish and maintain nicotine addiction. Tobacco control efforts need to not only address the general population, but also to focus on populations with a higher prevalence of tobacco use and lower rates of quitting. These populations include people from some racial/ethnic minority groups, people with mental illness, lower educational levels and socioeconomic status, and certain regions of the country. We now have proven interventions and policies to reduce tobacco initiation and use among youth and adults. With intense use of proven interventions, we can save lives and reduce health care costs. In 2012, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) launched the first-ever paid national tobacco education campaign — Tips From Former Smokers (Tips) — to raise awareness of the harms to health caused by smoking, encourage smokers to quit, and encourage nonsmokers to protect themselves and their families from exposure to secondhand smoke. It pulled back the curtain in a way that numbers alone cannot, and showed the tobacco-caused tragedies that we as health care professionals see and are saddened by every day. As a result of this campaign, an estimated 1.6 million smokers made an attempt to quit and, based on a conservative estimate, at least 100,000 smokers quit for good. Additionally, millions of nonsmokers talked with friends and family about the dangers of smoking and referred smokers to quit services. In 2013, CDC launched a new round of advertisements that helped even more people quit smoking by highlighting the toll that smoking-related illnesses take on smokers and their loved ones. CDC has also established reducing tobacco use as one of its "Winnable Battles." These are public health priorities with large-scale impact on health that have proven effective strategies to address them. CDC believes that with additional effort and support for evidence-based, cost-effective policy and program strategies to reduce tobacco use, we can reduce smoking substantially, prevent millions of people from being killed by tobacco, and protect future generations from smoking. ii While we have made tremendous progress over the past 50 years, sustained and comprehensive efforts are needed to prevent more people from having to suffer the pain, disability, disfigurement, and death that smoking causes. Most Americans who have ever smoked have already quit, and most smokers who still smoke want to quit. If we continue to implement tobacco prevention and cessation strategies that have proven effective in reducing tobacco use, people throughout our country will live longer, healthier, more productive lives"