

RiverOpinion

Legal, Natural Killers

Recently, Harvard researchers showed that the tobacco companies systematically increased the addicting quality of their product from the time period of 1997 to 2004.

Matthew Edlund
Contributing Columnist

If you were told that a drug slated to kill a billion people in the next century had just been made more lethal, would you care?

If you are the Bush administration the response is "No, just stay the course."

The drug is tobacco.

Recently, Harvard researchers showed that the tobacco companies systematically increased the addicting quality of their product from the time period of 1997 to 2004. They are not sure about after that time period.

The augmentation of nicotine availability averaged 1.6% per cent per year, an overall increase of 11%. It was seen in every category of cigarette.

Several questions arise:

1. Was this just a random change in tobacco nicotine yield over time?

The answer is no. The tobacco companies refine their product to an extraordinary degree and have done so for fifty years. They know exactly how nicotine will be delivered by a cigarette, how much people will need to inhale to get that nicotine, and where it will go. The increase in nicotine was consistent, systematic, across the board. It was thought out, considered, and implemented by the tobacco companies as a group.

2. Why are tobacco companies increasing the nicotine delivery of cigarettes? There are two reasons for this: to increase tobacco addictiveness to young people and those already smoking, and secondly, because they can get away with it - A majority of young people try tobacco. The more addictive the cigarette, the more likely they

will continue smoking. Those already addicted become more so. As government spokesmen might say, tobacco companies increasing nicotine is just "good business."

It certainly is for the Bush administration, which has received large dollops of tobacco campaign money. Those contributions have turned out to be a magnificent investment. The "highest levels" of the Bush administration stopped two major lawsuits by the Federal government. Together they were expected to net the government at least \$300 billion dollars. The lawsuits had been expected to break the back of several American tobacco companies, but George Bush made sure the companies will endure. The Treasury overburdened by Medicare health care costs and the war in Iraq, clearly does not need the money.

3. What was the national media response to learning about tobacco's increasingly lethality? Not much. As one journalism professor put it to me, there's the sense that "everybody knows tobacco kills." If it's converted into a more efficient killer, it doesn't interest many media outlets.

4. Why should you care? Because you're paying for it. You'll see real costs in the deaths of loved ones and co-workers. You'll see the costs in increased health insurance costs, as you and your family pay for the cancers, strokes and heart disease that tobacco causes in about half of smokers. You'll see it in the deaths of spouses



and children who don't smoke, as passive smoking continues to kill millions. You'll see it in the increased radioactivity of sidewalks and bars, as tobacco plants take up and cigarettes spew forth Polonium 210, the same stuff that murdered Alexander Litvinenko in London. Tobacco is radioactive, another fact the media doesn't think is worth much mention.

5. What can you do about it? A lot. First, you can support efforts begun by the FDA in the 1990s to regulate tobacco as a drug. Tobacco's ten thousand or so identified components include many separate drugs and carcinogens makes regulation imperative.

Second, you can support increases taxes on tobacco. Though it is proportionately harsher on the poor, tobacco taxes decrease smoking. In countries where packs cost six or more dollars, smoking markedly decreases.

Third, you can support bringing back federal lawsuits on the tobacco companies - that they colluded to hide from the public the way tobacco kills is acknowledged by everyone except the companies. They can be made to pay for their lies in ways that will help smokers quit and aid the public health. Public education makes a difference. More than half of American physicians use to smoke - now only 3% smoke.

There are 1.25 billion smokers in the world. Hundreds of millions will die in the next few decades from a preventable cause. Tobacco companies have been able to buy political cover in the present administration. Whether they can get away with it again in the next election is up to you.

Dr. Matthew Edlund, M.D., M.O.H., director of The Center for Circadian Medicine, is an expert on applied public health, sleep medicine and psychiatry. A former professor at Brown and University of Texas medical schools, he can be reached through his Website, doctoredlund.com, where previous "Staying Alive" articles are available.



Selling Neighbor to Neighbor

Lakewood Ranch Office
744-2980
1861 Lakewood Ranch Blvd. • Bradenton, FL 34211

OUTDOOR LIVING AT ITS BEST Amazing extended patio with custom salt-water pool and jacuzzi and private putting green. Upgrades galore throughout this golf course home. LR294 **\$759,900**

GOLF COURSE COMMUNITY 3/2/2 pool home on nature preserve lot for added privacy. Many upgrades including salt water pool, jacuzzi, surround sound and designer touches throughout home. LR295 **\$539,900**

GATES CREEK 3BR/2BA/2CG single family home. Beautiful lake and preserve view. New paint and flooring. Eat-in kitchen and much more. Close to I-75, shopping and restaurants. LR293 **\$255,000**

WINDING CREEK Like new 3/2 country home on 12+ acres. Fireplace, wood floors

and stainless steel appliances. Fenced yard, pond stocked and barn with tack room. LR236 **\$489,900**

SIT BACK AND RELAX Enjoy the sunsets and private view of the lake in this immaculate 3BR/2.5BA home in desirable neighborhood. 16 ft. ceilings and many upgrades. LR298 **\$344,900**

BAYSHORE GARDENS Updated 4BR/2BA home in established neighborhood. Close to water. Ready for you and your family. LR290 **\$222,000**

GATED COMMUNITY Wonderful end unit townhouse. Granite counter tops, open floor plan LRC426 **\$255,000**

INVESTOR'S SPECIAL 4/2 newly remod-

eled. Close to water with easy access to bay. Very well maintained. LR297 **\$274,900**

SABAL HARBOUR Spacious 4BR/2BA home offers gorgeous sunsets & tranquil lake views. Eat-in kitchen, new carpet, wood cabinets & much more. LR250 **\$319,000**

HERITAGE HARBOUR Reduced \$100,000! 4-6BR/3.5BA on preserve lot w/room for pool. Granite counters, ceramic tile, upgraded cabinets, appliances, bonus room, den, LR, DR, & FR. Golf course community. LR274 **\$649,000**

GOLF COURSE COMMUNITY Beautiful 3BR/2BA end unit with stunning views of golf course, lake & preserve. Numerous

upgrades. Looks like a model & is in move-in condition. LRC423 **\$259,900**

OAK TERRACE Immaculately clean 3BR/2BA home. Lush landscaping on corner lot. Privacy fence surrounds house & room for a pool. LR267 **\$248,900**

BRAND NEW HOMES Priced well below builder's cost. Two to choose from on gorgeous 1/2 acre preserve lot. 4-5BR/3BA/2CG with many upgrades including granite countertops, crown moulding, tray ceilings, ceramic tile.

HEART OF LAKEWOOD RANCH 3/2 home on 8.6 acres w/beautiful oak trees. Wood floors throughout, stone fireplace, caged pool & oversized workshop. Possible development opportunity. LR265 **\$1,195,000**

RESIDENTIAL

RIVER WILDERNESS Beautiful 3BR/2.5BA pool home nestled among 100 year old oak trees on 1/2 acre lot. Separate living room, dining room & family room with a fireplace. Located in a gated golf course community. LR238 **\$389,000**

ON SALE NOW!! PRICE REDUCTION!! Bring your horses & cows. Old Florida style 2/1 home on 5.4 beautiful fenced acres. Large pond, stalls, poles set for large barn. NO DEED RESTRICTIONS! Motivated Seller! LR240 **\$249,900**

RESIDENTIAL WITH ACREAGE

WINDING CREEK 2BR/2BA custom pool home on 5 acres. Upgrades include chef's kitchen, cathedral ceiling, country porch and detached garage. Sellers will assist with closing costs. LR241 **\$529,000**

COUNTRY LIVING ON 3.37 ACRES and only 10 minutes to I-75. 2BR/2BA Charming with beautiful wood floors, designer ceiling fans, neutral colors and so much more. No Deed Restrictions. LR285 **\$349,900**



Kelly Eckersen
Broker

WIDE OPEN SPACES Country living on 5 acres. Owner has shown great pride in this 3BR/2BA home. Must see to appreciate. LR263 **\$239,900**

QUIET SETTING Newer 3BR/2BA home on 12 + fenced acres with a barn and workshop. Bring your horses and toys. NO DEED RESTRICTIONS. LR242 **\$360,000**

LOTS WITH ACREAGE

NO DEED RESTRICTIONS 5 miles to I-75 on SR 64. 3.49 acres to build your dream home. Cleared w/scattered trees. Endless opportunities with this high & dry property. LA144 **\$289,000**

MYAKKA CITY Sprawling oaks, stocked pond and frontage on SR70. Lighted arena, well, buried electric & water. Adjoining 20+ acres available. Endless possibilities! LA142 **\$688,121**

OLD FLORIDA SETTING 20 +/- acres in an Old Florida setting with large oaks, winding drive to homesite. SR70 road frontage. Ready for your home or agricultural business. LA143 **\$1,027,940**

PRIVACY ABOUND Live in old Florida paradise surrounded by ancient oaks. 10 & 21 acre parcel with Myakka River and creek meandering through the back part of properties. NO DEED RESTRICTIONS A145 **\$599,000**

RENTALS

COUNTRY MEADOWS 4-5BR/3BA on 1/2 acre **\$2000**

CHELSEA OAKS 3-4BR/2BA home on Lake **\$1300**

HERITAGE HARBOUR 5-6BR Home **\$2750**

COMMERCIAL

LOTS OF POTENTIAL Warehouse currently

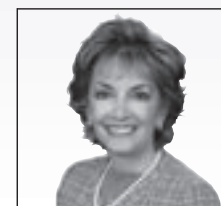
used for business. Zoning is RDD6 with future zone of Res-9. 4 parcels total. LA132 **\$299,000**

CREEKWOOD EAST CORPORATE PARK

- 7.2 acre parcel - **\$1,250,000**
- 4 acre parcel - **\$1,350,000**
- 4.8 acre parcel - **\$1,550,000**
- 7.94 acre parcel - **\$1,750,000**
- 9 acre parcel - **\$2,000,000**

EXCELLENT LOCATION WITH ROAD FRONTAGE! 1-acre lot located near Wal-Mart off of SR 64. Ideal location for church, school, daycare, offices, etc. C338 **\$469,000**

BELOW MARKET VALUE! 2.07 acre commercial lot currently zoned Light Industrial and approved for a 15,000 sq. ft. building. Includes \$100,000 in site plans, building permits and approvals! Located within minutes to I-75. C332 **\$725,000**



The perfect home for you is out there. The best mortgage is right here.

CONTACT: **Debbie Hazlett** • 941.749.6088 Office • 941.350.7185 Cell
1605 Lakewood Ranch Blvd., Bradenton, FL 34211
suntrustmortgage.com/dhazlett Apply online for a special offer!



Equal Housing Lender. SunTrust Mortgage, Inc., 901 Semmes Avenue, Richmond, VA 23224.
©2007, SunTrust Banks, Inc. SunTrust is a federally registered service mark of SunTrust Banks, Inc.

