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Title: Communication of Swiss health organizations during debate of the federal smoking ban 2008-2012

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Body: BACKGROUND: Swiss legislative process towards public smoking ban started in 2004 by the signature of the WHO -FCTC and the initiative of MP F. Gutzwiller MD. By oct. 2008 it had resulted in a federal alibi law, elaborated under heavy lobbying pressure, failing to meet WHO standards. Swiss Lung league (SLL: federation of cantonal lung leagues) launched a popular initiative aiming better legislation. The initiative was backed by an alliance of health organizations (HO). Despite 120 000 signatures collected by 2010, the law project was turned down by national vote 9/2012, after heavy campaigning. AIM/METHOD: Since media reporting was poor (only 10% of articles between 11/2009-02/2010 were in favor), we analysed official statements of HO to detect flaws, that may have contributed to desinformation. RESULTS: A. Swiss physicians federation first declined the initiative arguing backing the prevention law in parliament was more important, but finally endorsed it (01/10). B: The internists society president declined public positioning on passive smoking at the 2008 meeting, arguing the congress was not smoke free and sponsors should be consulted first, members assembly though endorsed the initiative in 2010, but no official public statement was issued. C. The SLL urged cantonal leagues to collect signatures, but some did not. D. The national Tobacco fighting organization AT, member of the initiatives alliance, proposed its withdrawal 6 months before the popular vote. CONCLUSION : Popular refusal of the initiatives law proposal for a federal smoking ban cannot be attributed to the the tobacco lobbys influence alone. Lack of coherent HO communication contributed to public desinformation.