

For Immediate Release



Beirut: 18-10-2018

AUB receives \$2.8 million grant to predict outcomes of tobacco product regulations

American University of Beirut (AUB) researchers affiliated with the Virginia Commonwealth University Center for the Study of Tobacco Products (CSTP) have been awarded a five-year \$2.8 million grant to develop computer models that can predict how the toxicity of tobacco products is affected by government regulations. The grant is part of a \$19.78 million award to the CSTP by the US National Institutes of Health and Food and Drug Administration. Involving a team of researchers from AUB, Johns Hopkins University, and the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), the overall purpose of the center is to develop tools that would allow authorities to predict intended and unintended health consequences of regulations designed to protect public health. Its focus over the coming five years is the regulation of electronic cigarettes, a rapidly growing and highly controversial category of tobacco products.

Dean of AUB's Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture and professor of mechanical engineering, Dr. Alan Shihadeh is director of Project 1, the technology and physical sciences arm of CSTP. Project 1 also includes the scientific leadership of Dr. Najat Saliba, director of AUB's Nature Conservation Center and professor of chemistry, and Dr. Joseph Zeaiter, AUB professor of chemical engineering.

“The tobacco industry employs thousands of chemists, psychologists, engineers, economists, and others to design, manufacture, and market the most addictive and profitable products possible,” said Shihadeh. “This project marshals that expertise to provide decision support systems that can be used by health authorities to reduce the harm caused by tobacco products.”

“Our goal is to be able to give FDA a suite of tools that they can use to predict if a potential tobacco product regulation will achieve its intended consequences, and also if it might have unintended consequences before that regulation goes into effect,” said Dr. Thomas Eissenberg, director of CSTP and professor in the VCU Department of Psychology.

CSTP is one of nine Tobacco Centers of Regulatory Science that provide research to the US National Institutes of Health and the Food and Drug Administration to ensure tobacco regulatory actions and activities are based on sound and relevant scientific evidence. The grant builds on a five-year \$18.3 million grant awarded to the center in 2013 to study tobacco products, such as e-cigarettes, and to develop evaluation methods to help inform regulatory policy.

“We’re trying to inform regulations that protect the health of nonsmokers who might be encouraged by marketing to try electronic cigarettes or other tobacco products, and also protect the health of smokers by making sure that, if they were to use an electronic cigarette in an attempt to get off tobacco cigarettes, they’re not using something that is also harmful to their health,” Eissenberg said.

“This work is exciting and significant because the overall end goal of the research is to protect the public’s health by providing solid data to inform FDA regulation of tobacco products such as e-cigarettes,” said Dr. Alison Breland, co-principal investigator on the grant and assistant research professor in the VCU Department of Psychology.

ENDS

For more information please contact:

Simon Kachar
Director of News and Media Relations
Mobile: (+961) 3-427-024
Office: (+961) 1-374-374 ext: 2676
Email: sk158@aub.edu.lb

Note to Editors

About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 900 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 9,100 students. AUB currently offers more than 120 programs leading to bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full-service 420-bed hospital.

Stay up to date on AUB news and events. Follow us on:

Website: www.aub.edu.lb
Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/aub.edu.lb>
Twitter: http://twitter.com/AUB_Lebanon