Building Programs of Excellence in Research and Scholarship in Tobacco Control in China

C. Huang 1, A. Goyal 2, P. Redmon 3, J. P. Koplan 3,*, M. P. Eriksen 4
1Hubert Department of Global Health, 2Epidemiology, 3Global Health Institute, Emory University, 4Public Health Institute, Georgia State University, Atlanta, United States

Background
The Emory Global Health Institute – China Tobacco Control Partnership (GHI-CTP) is a program funded by The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, USA. The goal of the GHI-CTP is to reduce the health, social, environmental and economic burdens of tobacco use by increasing capacity in China to develop and implement effective, accountable, and sustainable tobacco prevention and control initiatives. The goal of the Programs of Excellence in Tobacco Control initiative is to provide support for applied research that will advance tobacco control efforts in China.

The Programs of Excellence in Tobacco Control is an important addition to tobacco control efforts in China and will serve as a resource for applied research on best and promising practices in tobacco control, information, resources and materials, training, and scholarship, all with the goal of reducing tobacco use in China.

Objectives
The Programs of Excellence in Tobacco Control are expected to conduct research and promote scholarship that will lead to major scientific advances that can be applied to and advance tobacco control in China. The overarching goals for the Programs of Excellence in Tobacco Control include:

• Increasing the number of scholars from relevant disciplines who focus on tobacco control
• Generating research evidence to improve understanding of effective methods to reduce tobacco use and can be applied in China
• Increasing the number of scholars contributing to evidence based tobacco control research
• Assuring the application of evidence based research in applied tobacco control efforts in China
• Increasing the number of peer-reviewed publications in the area of tobacco use, prevention, and cessation
• Providing support of information sharing, technical assistance and professional training, as well as skills and expertise.

Programs of Excellence in Tobacco Control

Kunming Medical University, School of Public Health
The program at the Kunming University School of Public Health, under the direction of its principal investigator, Dr. Cai Le, is focused on the rural Chinese population, specifically to:
• Provide comprehensive analyses of the harm associated with smoking and secondhand smoke as well as the related economic costs
• Identify the socio-economic factors influencing both tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke

The research focuses on key variables related to tobacco control including knowledge, attitudes, behavior and medical history among the rural population in Yunnan, China. Analyses will enable tobacco control practitioners and policy makers to create better and more custom policies and programs for the rural Chinese population.

Yunnan Agricultural University, College of Economics and Management
Two investigators, Dr. Zhao Yaqiao, from Yunnan Agricultural University, and Dr. Li Xiaoliang, from Pioneers for Health Consultancy Center, are leading a study that analyzes the feasibility of growing alternatives to tobacco in rural China. Their program includes:
• Local engagement to better understand the current needs and concerns of the tobacco growing communities
• Participatory research on the feasibility of alternative crops
• Message development on the medical and economic benefits of growing alternatives to tobacco crops

Tsinghua University Law School
Health Research Centre of Tsinghua University
The Tsinghua University program, led by Professor Wang Chenguang, has two primary components:
• Conduct analyses on tobacco control policy and legal issues
• Establish a tobacco control legal center that provides expertise and resources throughout China

The Tsinghua program has several additional initiatives to support China’s national tobacco control effort, including an assessment of how the World Health Organization’s Framework Convention on Tobacco Control functions in terms of China civil law. This analysis should enable leaders to make recommendations for, and draft, future laws and legislation. The university also intends to conduct research and policy reviews and to develop a 100% smoke-free public places model policy.

Shanghai Jiao Tong University, School of Public Health
This Program of Excellence study, led by Professor Jin Ma, is focused on addressing gaps in behavioral and social science research in the tobacco control arena. The program will:
• Assess smoking initiation among youth and college students and determine related behavioral, social, family and community influences
The Shanghai Jiao Tong University research will provide information for the development of strategies to decrease initiation of smoking among Chinese youth and college students.

Shandong University, Department of Epidemiology and Health Statistics
Shandong University’s program targets the rural Chinese population in the province of Shandong, China. Under the direction of Principal Investigator Dr. Chongqi Jia, the program seeks to:
• Assess the current tobacco use and control situation among rural residents in Shandong, China, and
• Explore appropriate, effective and sustainable tobacco control strategies and model practices in rural China
Their applied research will enable the Shandong program to become a resource for comprehensive tobacco control program interventions and strategies for rural China.