

Tobacco control, stigma, and public health: rethinking the relations

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Abstrak

The AIDS epidemic has borne witness to the terrible burdens imposed by stigmatization and to the way in which marginalization could subvert the goals of HIV prevention. Out of that experience, and propelled by the linkage of public health and human rights, came the commonplace assertion that stigmatization was a retrograde force. Yet, strikingly, the antitobacco movement has fostered a social transformation that involves the stigmatization of smokers. Does this transformation represent a troubling outcome of efforts to limit tobacco use and its associated morbidity and mortality; an ineffective, counterproductive, and moralizing approach that leads to a dead end; or a signal of public health achievement? If the latter is the case, are there unacknowledged costs?