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## BOOK REVIEW

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# IARC Handbooks of Cancer Prevention - Volume 6 Weight Control and Physical Activity

Eds Harri Vainio, Franca Bianchini, ISBN 92 832 3006 X

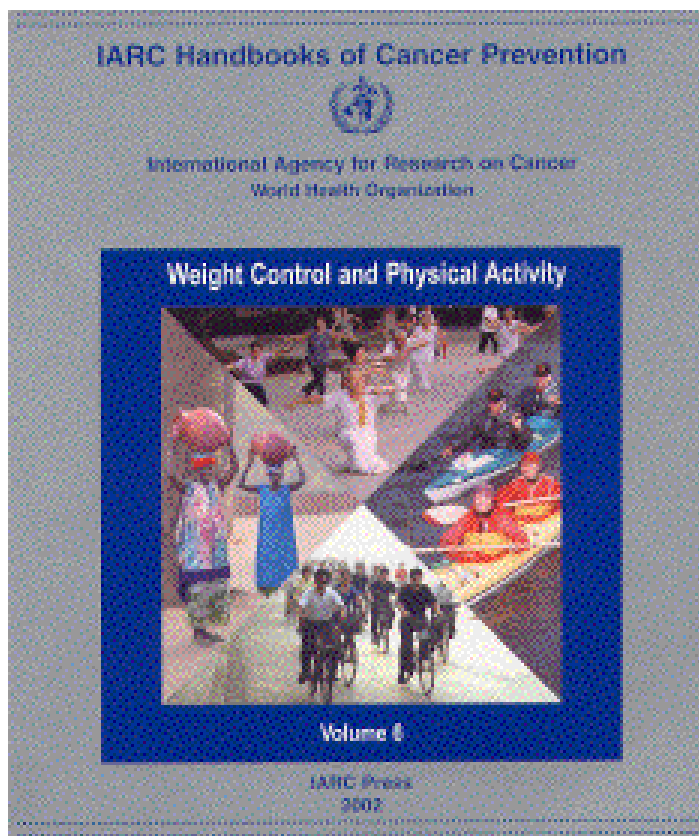
Continuing the series focusing on different aspects of cancer prevention, Volume 6 on Weight Control and Physical Activity was published in early 2002. The result of an IARC Working Group Workshop on the Evaluation of Cancer-Preventive Strategies, held in Lyon, France, on February 13-20, 2001, and partially supported by the Foundation for Promotion of Cancer Research, Japan, this well laid-out 315 page publication, with 52 pages of references, was edited by Harri Vainio and Franca Bianchini of the Unit for Cancer Chemoprevention at IARC. The total of eleven chapters comprehensively cover the targeted area, ranging from definitions through to the final evaluation and recommendations.

Leading on from a general treatment of weight control and physical activity in Chapter 1, findings for weight profiles and levels of physical activity, means of preventing weight gain and increase physical exercise, and metabolic consequences of weight and fitness level are detailed in Chapters 2-4. This is followed by a thorough review of the literature regarding cancer preventive effects in specific organs, treating human studies and experimental systems separately, with a section on possible underlying mechanisms in Chapter 5.

Other possible beneficial effects are covered in Chapter 6 while the question of carcinogenic or promoting influence due to cycling of dietary restriction, as opposed to the benefit which generally occurs, and the potential adverse impact on reproductive and developmental parameters are detailed in Chapters 7 and 8.

Chapter 9 succinctly summarizes the available data in some nine pages while Chapter 10 provides recommendations for future work. Regarding research, these concentrate attention on the necessity for maintaining and enhancing monitoring capacity, epidemiological studies taking into account diverse populations, clinical as well as community intervention studies, and assessment of mechanisms. For public health, it is concluded that government, industry and NGOs should provide more information and improve access to healthy meals and recreation and sports facilities

Regarding the final evaluation, set out in Chapter 11, in humans there is *sufficient evidence* for a cancer preventive effect of avoidance of weight gain, with reference to cancers of the colon, breast (post-menopausal), endometrium, kidney (renal-cell) and adenocarcinoma of the oesophagus. This is similarly the case for physical activity and the colon and breast, with *limited evidence* for the endometrium and prostate. These conclusions are backed by the data from experimental animals and it was estimated that excess body weight and physical inactivity might account for approximately one fourth to one third of the cancers in the tissues mentioned. Given the obvious benefit of weight control and exercise for other chronic ailments like cardiovascular disease and type II diabetes there can be no doubt about the efficacy, if appropriate intervention strategies can be implemented. There is also no doubt that this publication is an essential aid to all who might wish to contribute to this area of research in the future (to order: contact [press@iarc.fr](mailto:press@iarc.fr)).



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**Malcolm A Moore**

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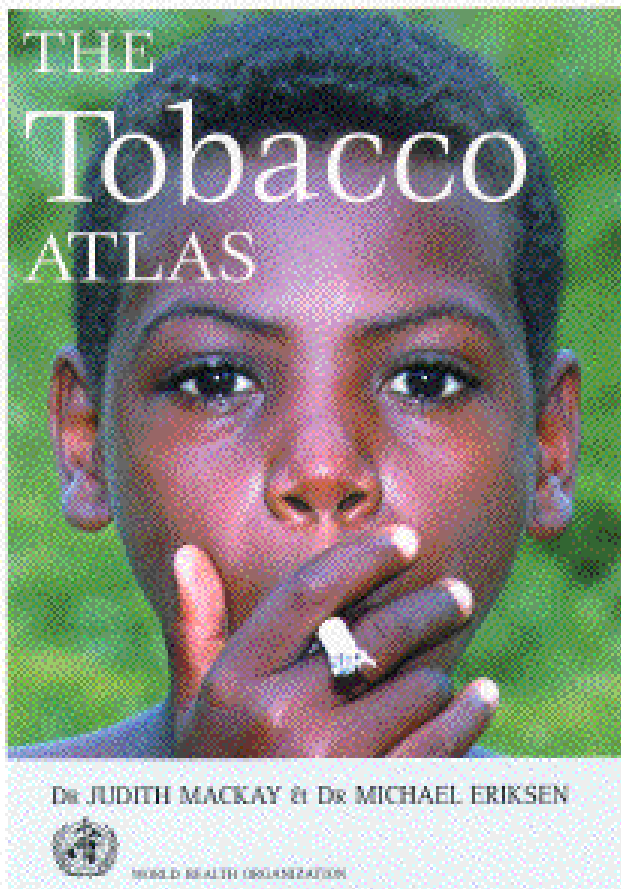
## BOOK REVIEW

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### **The Tobacco Atlas, World Health Organization**

**Judith Mackay, Michael Eriksen, ISBN 92 4156 209 9**

This beautifully produced 128-page paperback document provides readily accessible data on all aspects of the tobacco problem, from the history of tobacco in different regions of the world through data for prevalence and health impact to financial costs, ramifications of politics and trade, and actions which can be taken. With a foreword by Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland, present Director-General of the World Health Organization, stressing the importance of the global battle against the tobacco menace, the publication was financially supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).



The authors, Dr Judith Mackay, Director of the Asian Consultancy on Tobacco Control and Senior Policy Adviser to the World Health Organization, and Dr Michael Eriksen, a Distinguished Consultant at the CDC in Atlanta, and also an adviser to WHO, are to be commended on the creative approach adopted to highlight the diverse features of the global epidemic.

The series of full-colour maps with well designed text figures and graphics give instant simple access to whatever statistics might be desired, whether for percentages of adult and youth smokers, consumption levels, risks from active and passive smoking, and associated mortality. Particularly illuminating is the section on costs, including statistics for health burden, fire damage, time off work, and the major slice of personal income which smokers risk in the developing world. There is a comprehensive coverage of the tobacco trade, where the plant is grown, by whom, imports and exports, whether legal or illegal, sponsorship and other advertising, and the politics underlying whatever measures are being promoted. In addition to coverage of research and tobacco control organisations, there is a major section on legislation, in terms of smoke-free areas and bans, health warnings, and education, balanced by sober figures on quitting rates, pricing policies and taxes. Last but not least, the potential promise of litigation is put in focus, with countries in which lawsuits from many different quarters, including the tobacco industry itself, highlighted in red or purple. The book is rounded off with data for future trends and a series of Tables on the demographics and business side of tobacco, along with a glossary of terms sources and index.

As the authors maintain, this a truly a publication with relevance to anyone who is 'concerned with personal or political health, governance, politics, economics, big business, corporate behaviour, smuggling, tax, religion, internet, allocation of resources, human development and the future'. The multifaceted approach for which they argue is of the essence for all cancer prevention efforts, and we can all learn from the immense work and cooperation that has gone into the Tobacco Atlas. The Acknowledgements pages reads like a veritable Who's Who of those active in the field of tobacco control worldwide, with major support provided by staff at WHO, Geneva, as well as Regional Offices (AFRO, EMRO, EURO, PAHO, SEARO and WPRO) and NGOs. The publication does not pretend to be comprehensive but the sources are well documented and I have no hesitation in recommending all wishing an invaluable source of information on general aspects of the tobacco problem to take the trouble to obtain a copy ([bookorders@who.int](mailto:bookorders@who.int)).

**Malcolm A Moore**

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