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Contact:  
Tom Langford  
617-761-6775  
[tom.langford@fkhealth.com](mailto:tom.langford@fkhealth.com)

## **National Effort Launches to Get 15 Million Adults to Quit Smoking by 2024**

*New report shows smoking cessation measures have neglected adult smokers, leading to nearly 500,000 deaths per year*

NEW YORK, March 15, 2017 – With smoking being the single largest cause of preventable illness and death in the United States, a coalition of prominent health leaders is announcing a major new effort to curb adult smoking in America. A [report](#) released today by the Tobacco Reform Initiative, and compiled with input from 120 key U.S. tobacco control leaders, outlines the health issues and financial burden of smoking and calls for the adoption of three priority actions to reduce the number of adult smokers in the U.S. from 40 million to 25 million by 2024.

“Each year, cigarette smoking directly kills nearly 500,000 Americans and costs the country more than \$170 billion in medical costs. Yet, the public, the media and lawmakers have neglected this health crisis,” said John R. Seffrin, Ph.D., professor of practice at Indiana University's School of Public Health. “Deaths and medical costs from smoking are entirely preventable and clearly existing programs are not doing enough. Urgent action is needed to drastically reduce the adult smoking rate in the U.S.”

The report has two major findings. The first is that while smoking prevention in kids has made substantial progress, much more needs to be done to promote adult smoking cessation. The second is that vaping and non-combustible products need to be accepted as smoking cessation tools, or the number of smokers switching from high-risk to low-risk options could be limited.

In response to these findings, the report's authors advocate for three steps to reform U.S. tobacco control policy and achieve a dramatic cut in the adult smoking rate. These actions are supported by new insights into what drives behavior change. They are:

1. Make tobacco taxation relevant to risk. This would involve a major change to the way tobacco products are taxed in America.
2. Convince employers and health professionals to more strongly promote smoking cessation measures.

3. Update tobacco product regulations to provide incentives that more rapidly promote the development and marketing of less dangerous substitutes for cigarettes.

“It is imperative that the U.S. quickly adopt the scientifically validated steps outlined in this report before millions more Americans unnecessarily die from smoking. Waiting even one more day would be irresponsible. We must make smoking cessation our number one public health priority,” said Mike Cummings, Ph.D., professor, Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences; co-leader, Tobacco Research Program, Hollings Cancer Center, Medical University of South Carolina.

The report’s primary authors are nine prominent tobacco-control leaders:

- **K. Michael Cummings, Ph.D.**, co-leader of the Tobacco Research Program at the Medical University of South Carolina
- **Allan Erickson**, former vice president for Public Education and Tobacco Control at the American Cancer Society
- **John Seffrin, Ph.D.**, professor of practice, School of Public Health, Indiana University at Bloomington
- **Donald Shopland**, former director of the Office on Smoking and Health in the U.S. Public Health Service
- **Michael Terry**, son of former U.S. Surgeon General, Luther Terry, M.D.
- **Scott Ballin, JD**, health policy consultant to the Morven Dialogue, University of Virginia
- **Derek Yach, MBChB, MPH**, senior consultant, The Vitality Group, and a former executive director at the World Health Organization
- **Tom Glynn, Ph.D.**, consulting professor, School of Medicine, Stanford University
- **Charles LeMaistre, M.D.**, former director, MD Anderson Cancer Center and member of the first Surgeon General's Advisory Committee on Smoking and Health (deceased January 28, 2017)

Combined, the authors have more than 340 years of service to fighting tobacco. They are joined by dozens of other influential senior health leaders who are now tasked with implementing the recommendations of the report. That work will begin immediately, as the report is formally shared with Congress, federal agencies, national organizations and professional associations. The full report, “Ending Cigarette Use by Adults in a Generation is Possible,” is available for download online at [www.tobaccoreform.org](http://www.tobaccoreform.org).

#### **About the Tobacco Reform Initiative**

The Tobacco Reform Initiative was formed in 2014 by a Core Team of senior tobacco control leaders dedicated to the development of strategies to reach a 10-year interagency goal of reducing the prevalence of adults who smoke to 10% by 2024. The leadership of the Tobacco Reform Initiative includes experts in the epidemiology of tobacco use and tobacco risks, public health policy and practice, and in strategy, planning and organizational development.

#### **About Vitality**

The Vitality Group is a member of Discovery Ltd., a global financial services organization offering an incentive-based health and well-being program to employers as part of their benefits program. With a foundation based on actuarial science and behavioral economic theory, Vitality encourages changes in lifestyle that reduce health care costs, both in the short run and long term, by rewarding members for addressing their specific health issues. Vitality well-being programs serve companies in a wide range of sizes and industries, improving individuals’ health and wellbeing as well as employers’ bottom lines. For more information, please visit [www.thevitalitygroup.com](http://www.thevitalitygroup.com)

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