indeterminate cases? A possible factor could be unrecognised complementary and alternative medications. Careful investigation will be necessary in LMICs, particularly in rural areas, to begin to resolve these issues. We declare no competing interests.

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Increasing tobacco sales under the anti-smoking policy in China

China joined the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in 2005, but tobacco control in China is still worrying.1 In the past decade, the Chinese Government has strengthened the publicity of anti-smoking campaigns in the media and increased the management of anti-smoking through policies. Nevertheless, paradoxically, tobacco sales have been rising.

Tobacco sales are essential to the country’s economy. In 2018, the total state value of the tobacco industry was ¥1.00008 trillion, an increase of 3.37% over the same period from the previous year. Moreover, more than 70% of China’s tobacco production is located in deprived areas, providing local pillar industries and jobs. In 2018, the total profit of tobacco planting for farmers was ¥55 billion, helping 41.000 poor households to get out of poverty.2 Moreover, more than 4.88% over the same period from the previous year, and the industrial added value of the tobacco industry was ¥1.00008 trillion, an increase of 3.37% over the same period from the previous year.2

Although the government emphasised that smoking should be banned, the sales target for tobacco increases every year. 47.39 million boxes of cigarettes were sold in China in 2017, but the goal was to sell 47.5 million boxes—nearly 119 billion packs—in 2019.3 Warning images on cigarette packaging is a very obvious type of tobacco control and is recommended by the FCTC.4 However, China’s tobacco industry has boycottted the warning images on packaging on the grounds of culture. The warning images are replaced by images with a positive meaning, such as a panda, Tiananmen Square, or a landscape painting. These images will lead to the misunderstanding that tobacco is less harmful than it really is, especially to people who are new smokers and young people.

Teenagers can buy cigarettes at any retailer or online without showing identity cards. Although several laws stipulate that cigarettes cannot be sold to minors, the government department in charge of upholding these laws and its standards to punish are unclear.5 With financial needs, sales pressure, cultural blessing, and deliberate laissez–faire attitude at the enforcement level, China still has a long way to become a tobacco–free country. We declare no competing interests.

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