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## **TOBACCO-FREE Rx CALLS FOR THE AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION TO CUT FINANCIAL TIES WITH WALGREENS**

**TobaccofreeRx**, a national interdisciplinary group of healthcare professionals and public health advocates, has asked the **American Heart Association** (AHA) to end its financial relationships with **Walgreens**. Walgreens is a Fortune 500 corporation that operates the nation's largest drugstore chain, but continues to profit from the sale of tobacco products in almost all of its 7,847 drugstores nationwide.

Walgreens is a principal sponsor of the American Heart Association. In exchange for the use of the AHA name in its newspaper inserts and [in various online promotions](#), Walgreens gives at least \$100,000 to the AHA. This includes [Walgreens' donations towards the annual American Heart Month](#) in February.

According to [data from the Centers for Disease Control](#), cigarette smoking alone causes 141,900 deaths from ischemic heart disease and stroke each year.

"We are concerned that the American Heart Association is contributing to tobacco use by continuing its relationship with Walgreens," said Vinayak Jha, MD, a pulmonary and critical care physician and assistant professor of medicine at The George Washington University School of Medicine & Health Sciences. Dr. Jha is a founder of TobaccofreeRx. "The American Heart Association should send a strong message to Walgreens that it is unacceptable to claim to promote health while also selling cigarettes."

"Cigarette smoking is the leading avoidable cause of heart disease, and for the American Heart Association to take money from a vendor of cigarettes is like a detective taking money from the mob," added Alan Blum, MD, a professor of family medicine and director of the University of Alabama Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society.

Dr. Jha noted that TobaccofreeRx will continue to scrutinize financial relationships between drugstore chains and health charities and will update its findings on its website [www.TobaccofreeRx.org](http://www.TobaccofreeRx.org).

### **About TobaccofreeRx**

**TobaccofreeRx** is an interdisciplinary group of pharmacists, pharmacy school and medical school faculty, pharmacy students, nurses, physicians, attorneys, and health advocates that was organized in 2010 to end the sale of tobacco products in pharmacies. The Board of Advisors includes Alan Blum, Lisa Causey-Streete, K. Michael Cummings, Bob Gordon, Laura Gube, Karen Hudmon, Paul Jungnickel, Patrick Malone, Judy Rightmyer, Elizabeth Sullivan, Ashley Weems, and D.J. Wilson.

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