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## Background

- The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) was given regulatory authority (2009) over some tobacco products under the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act
- Regulation of tobacco is inherently different from FDA regulation of food and drug, normally held to a safe and effective standard
- Along with regulation of tobacco, FDA is tasked with communicating risks of tobacco use to the public
- FDA has launched campaigns including *The Real Cost*, *Fresh Empire* and *Break the Chain*
- Little research has examined public awareness and perception of FDA in this role
- This research examines the public's awareness and perception of FDA as the regulatory authority over tobacco products



## Methods and Demographics

- Conducted six focus groups among adults 18-65 tobacco users and non tobacco users
- 90-minute sessions conducted by trained moderator, co-moderator and note taker
- Part of larger study on source credibility in communication about tobacco and health
- Verbatim transcripts were coded by four analysts
- Approved by the IRB at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Study #13-2822).

Demographics	Total (N=41)
<b>Age M (SD)</b>	
Years	33.1 (11.2)
Range	18-58
<b>Sex n (%)</b>	
Female	23 (56.1)
<b>Race n (%)</b>	
White	25 (61.0)
African American	10 (24.4)
Asian	4 (9.8)
American Indian	1 (2.4)
More than One Race	1 (2.4)
<b>Hispanic Origin n (%)</b>	
Non-Hispanic	35 (85.4)
Hispanic	6 (14.6)

## Results

### Knowledge about FDA

- "Not much. I know that it exists...I know it's the Food and Drug Administration. But that's about it." **Group 1**
- "If something has not passed through and been approved by the FDA it is probably not good for you." **Group 2**

### Trust in FDA

- "See, I think I trust them. Because there is so much they research and look into. I would trust them. I would rather go with something FDA approved than not." **Group 2**
- "A lot of times you hear about the people who work in the FDA. When they retire they end up going to work for the people that they were supposed to be monitoring, and then you wonder was there a, 'Hey, let our drug go through and we'll give you a swanky job when you retire?'" **Group 3**

### Attitudes Towards FDA as a Tobacco Regulator

- "That brings the agency, for me, into a much more positive light. Seeing how they handle what I believe to be a dangerous product. Seeing how they handle that really does increase my approval of the FDA." **Group 1**
- "I think it is a major priority mismatch in the FDA getting into tobacco. Because the FDA would rather do a better job controlling chemicals in food, or genetically modified food. Or bad things which we end up eating." **Group 2**
- "People think pharmaceuticals are safe because they're approved by the FDA. That's something that the FDA does. And so putting them on nicotine might have that same effect." **Group 1**

### Communication of Tobacco Risks

- "I feel like there's a pivotal age at which people make the decision, for one reason or another, whether they want to smoke or not. ... just present all the facts to them at a young enough age where they can have time to think about it, and understand what they're getting into before they get into it." **Group 4**
- "If you are consuming something -- just like with food, and alcohol, and tobacco -- and you are addicted to them I think it's a great idea to offer options of cessation and stuff. And just promote that, and say if you want to quit -- let's quit. You want to quit because it costs too much, you want to quit for the health benefits." **Group 5**

## Discussion

- Participants had limited understanding of FDA's responsibilities over food and drugs
- They expressed varying degrees of trust in FDA
- Most unaware that FDA regulates tobacco
  - Uncertainty about meaning of FDA regulation
  - Concern that FDA adding tobacco would take away from Food or Drug safety
  - Concern that FDA designates things as safe; tobacco products are known to be harmful
- Supportive of public communication about tobacco risks, especially when directed at youth



## Strengths and Limitations

- Diverse population recruited to participate and robust qualitative methods
- Participants given a brief explanation of FDA oversight of tobacco and expressed feelings based on that explanation
- Study conducted in a state with historically strong ties to tobacco

## Conclusion

- Although generally unaware that FDA regulates tobacco, once informed, many were supportive of further restrictions.
- The goals of oversight and the impact on safety of tobacco products should be communicated more broadly, along with difference between oversight and 'approval'.

Please Contact Kristen Jarman if you have questions about this research  
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