



SRNT

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Facilitated Board Discussion Report

Presenters: Shyanika Rose, Andy Tan, Micah Berman

Authors of [“Commercial Tobacco and Nicotine Industry-Funded Research Has No Place in SRNT and *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*”](#)

**Tuesday, October 1, 2024
4:00 – 5:00 PM Eastern US**

KEY POINT 1: Ban Industry influence

Harm reduction is not the issue – that is the purview of independent researchers to decide whether or not they see nicotine supporting harm reduction. The key concern is the provenance of research funding.

There was clear emphasis on the point that the tobacco and nicotine industries fund research in support of product sales and benefit to their shareholders. Their priority is financial benefit for the company and shareholders, not public health.

Banning nicotine and tobacco industry participation completely is not censorship. Fully banning non-medicinal industry participation/publication would align SRNT with other organizations including the American Thoracic Society, Journal of Health Psychology, Heart, BMJ, Thorax, PLoS journals, and Tobacco Control.

SRNT carries weight. Publishing and/or presenting industry research under SRNT and *NTR* gives undue credibility to that research. There is acknowledgement that the editorial board of *NTR* has editorial independence to make decisions on a case-by-case basis, with those decisions in the minority.

Banning nicotine and tobacco industry presentations at SRNT and publication in *NTR* doesn't mean industry can't present science and interested members can't access industry research; they can—just not through SRNT.

Discussion Narrative

The presenters don't see banning industry and industry-funded research as an issue of harm reduction. Rather, the issue is that of industry influence—an inherently conflicted industry that has an interest in shaping science to their own benefit. The position that allowing industry to participate

is “open and transparent” is wishful thinking, based on documented history of industry’s use of obfuscation as a tool for advancing their own interests. Industry acts in best interest of shareholders, not the public.

The group clearly sees what industry gets out of being allowed to participate in SRNT but does not see what SRNT gets out of allowing industry to participate. Industry representatives have been seen interacting with junior researchers at conferences and using their participation to legitimize their research (post-conference press releases).

Members have left SRNT over this issue. The group believes that it is a threat when SRNT privileges industry over members.

Nicotine and Tobacco companies are racist, targeting black, brown, LGBTQ+, and other minoritized communities. There are systemic, ongoing, deliberate actions that profit off of these communities. Allowing industry participation is antithetical to SRNT’s stated desire to be an anti-racist association. This is a issue of commitment and ethical obligation.

As a scientific society, SRNT should follow the science. The science shows how, time and time again, industry has lied about or mislead the public and the research community. Why does SRNT want that sort of behavior to shape conversations within the Society? SRNT is lending credibility to the industry and allowing industry to advance their goals through the conference and *NTR*.

This is not about censorship but about lending SRNT’s credibility to the industry and allowing the industry to push their goals through SRNT and *NTR*.

SRNT should have no ties with industry, including consulting. This is about the basic principle of sound science and not allowing science to be used by people who are motivated to advance interest of the funder, not the general public.

Discussion Narrative - Nicotine Industry

SRNT tobacco industry policy should be expanded to all nicotine manufacturers, regardless of what products they sell—including consultants to those industries. The group clarified that this does not apply to pharmaceutical companies, whose products are regulated as medicinal. Although the examples of CDER and CTP were used, it was also noted that SRNT is an international association, therefore its policies should not be tied to a US framework.

The nicotine industry is making products with high nicotine levels; promoting them to youth; and having a negative impact on vulnerable populations. Furthermore, regulators cannot stay on top of the issue as new products are constantly being released, flooding the market with illegal vapes.

The Nicotine industry is trying to drive the agenda/discussion, just as Big Tobacco has done. Recent findings show Juul was being deceptive in its research findings and there is no reason to assume other companies are acting any differently; it is naïve to think otherwise. Synthetic nicotine manufacturers also have an interest in positive research findings.

There is little incentive in the US for vaping devices to choose medicinal regulatory route. Therefore, all nicotine products should be treated the same as tobacco products. If they aren’t manufactured for

medicinal purposes, they are manufactured for profit. SRNT shouldn't distinguish between companies essentially doing the same thing.

FSFW and any other groups funded by the nicotine or tobacco industries should be included in a policy ban.

KEY POINT 2: Consultants

There is an admitted difference of opinion across the membership about how to manage the membership and participation of consultants.

Discussion Narrative

The presenters believe consultants should be subjected to the same policies as industry employees. When asked “when is a consultant and not a consultant?” and “When would a former consultant be allowed back into the fold?” the group suggested using SRNT current disclosure requirement of five years. Specifically, if anyone has any industry funding to disclose, they would be considered to be an industry consultant; anyone who has conducted any research as a consultant would be banned from SRNT participation for five years following that consultation. They suggested that SRNT err on the side of disclosures—if someone needs to disclose then the guidance needed by SRNT has been provided.