

S2. Why is it so difficult to transmit cancer prevention goals to society?

K. Law*

Cancer Research UK, London, UK

It is estimated that over half of all cancers could be avoided through changes in lifestyle. Despite some significant achievements including a reduction in the numbers of people smoking (at least in developed countries) there is no doubt that there has been a failure to effectively target “hard to reach”, disadvantaged populations. With the looming “obesity epidemic” there is a clear need to understand why health promotion messages are not as effective as we might wish and how we might improve this situation.

Some potential barriers and questions to ask about effective behaviour change include: the relative lack of research funding in comparison to that targeted at basic, translational and clinical research and the challenges associated with the long-term commitment needed to provide evidence of effectiveness; are the “right people” given responsibility for developing effective messages

that have a real meaning for the intended audience; the mixed messages via the media both from organisations with a vested interest and those with a genuine aim to promote health.

This brief presentation will, necessarily, focus on only a few of the relevant issues and questions and will offer a perspective from Cancer Research UK as the leading non governmental organisation funding cancer research in Europe. The Charity undertakes policy work with government which has included lobbying for anti-smoking legislation and control of sunbed use, development of health promotion leaflets (“Reduce the Risk”, SunSmart, “Five-a Day”) and promoting the benefits of screening (breast, cervical and bowel).

In addition to this, we are committed to supporting high quality prevention research.