



August 6, 2021

Dr. Megan Piper  
Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco  
2424 American Lane  
Madison, WI 53704-3102123

Dear Dr. Piper,

Following your communication of July 7, 2021, I would like to share some thoughts—on behalf of Philip Morris International (PMI) and our scientists—concerning the decision of SRNT’s Board of Directors to ban employees of the tobacco industry from attending your annual conference as of next year.

I appreciate your openness in outlining the Board’s rationale behind this decision. And while I recognize the skepticism that exists toward our company and the industry as a whole, I am nonetheless dismayed by the logic that excludes from the scientific debate on nicotine and tobacco products organizations like PMI that conduct internationally recognized research to bring less harmful, smoke-free alternatives to men and women who smoke.

Much of the progress achieved to date with the development of smoke-free products can be attributed to the remarkable advancement of science over the past decade. But science flourishes where there is broad scientific discourse. Banning attendees based on their affiliation will only serve to undermine opportunities for further progress, by limiting the exchange of ideas and the ability of the scientific community to openly discuss new findings. Science, when carried out under rigorous quality standards and shared in a transparent way, advances knowledge. Why shouldn’t such work be openly discussed with academia and others in your events?

For the first time in history, we can realistically envision a future where smoking is eliminated—but to get there, we need joint action, not exclusion. To do our part, we have placed science at the core of our transformation, leading the industry toward a future without cigarettes. Today, we are the only international tobacco company to have committed to going completely smoke-free by encouraging full switch of adult smokers to better alternatives than continued smoking. We are disrupting our traditional business from the inside out, focusing our resources on developing, scientifically substantiating, and responsibly commercializing smoke-free products that one day—hopefully soon in many countries in which we operate—will completely replace cigarette sales. Our ambition is for more than 50% of our total net revenues to be generated by smoke-free products by 2025 (up from approximately 24% at the end of 2020). We also aim for at least 40 million adults—half of them in non-OECD countries—to have switched to our smoke-free products and stopped smoking by 2025.

The scientific work that underpins PMI’s transformation is built on a collaborative approach and the expertise that our world-class scientists bring in the fields of chemistry, toxicology, biology, informatics, medicine, and perception and behavior. We have a rigorous approach to experimental monitoring and a robust Quality Management System to ensure quality and integrity of our smoke-free products during their complete lifecycle, from development through commercialization. In doing so, PMI’s scientific work



contributes important insights to the collective knowledge on nicotine and tobacco, as well as on human biology and behavior.

Openly sharing the science behind our smoke-free products and enabling the independent review of our research is a central element of our scientific assessment program. To ensure both the transparency and the reproducibility of our scientific findings, we have implemented state-of-the-art programs and platforms, such as INTERVALS<sup>1</sup> and sbv IMPROVER<sup>2</sup>, where we make available the methods, data, and results of our toxicology, systems biology, clinical, and population-level studies. Moreover, our work has been shared in more than 400 peer-reviewed publications and book chapters since 2008, as well as at countless events and scientific fora.

Importantly, we actively seek external scrutiny of our scientific findings by regulatory authorities and expert bodies. These include the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which conducted a rigorous review of our scientific package for IQOS, PMI's tobacco heating system, authorizing it to be marketed in the U.S. as a Modified Risk Tobacco Product with reduced exposure claims. FDA thoroughly reviewed our scientific evidence and continues to do so through new applications that we have submitted more recently. It is mystifying that SRNT, which describes itself as an "advocate for evidence-based research," has chosen to not allow discussion of this very same scientific evidence at its events.

To be clear, I am not overlooking the strongly held opinions about the tobacco industry and the contentious debate that has played out for many years. Nevertheless, values such as objectivity, openness, and fairness are fundamental to our collective work as scientists and must be safeguarded through rigorous peer review and a relentless emphasis on transparency, a view that I believe many SRNT members also share. These same high standards of transparency and integrity should in fact apply to all—including the special interest groups that are driven not by science and facts, but rather by their ideological opposition to the tobacco industry.

Your communication also raises specific concerns on the commercialization of tobacco and nicotine-containing products. For PMI, the responsible sales and marketing of all our products is a matter of priority, wherever we operate. We have clear global standards that ensure we market our products truthfully and transparently, only to adults who smoke or use other nicotine-containing consumer products. This is an important topic, and I invite you to read our latest Integrated Report<sup>3</sup> for a detailed overview of the measures we have in place. As for the complaints of unprofessional or problematic behavior, we are not aware of any such incidents involving PMI's scientists or conference attendees. We fully support SRNT's Code of Conduct and would expect that all the employees who represent PMI at your conferences do the same. If there are specific examples of such occurrences regarding our employees that you can provide, rest assured that we will take the necessary action.

Once thought impossible, a smoke-free future is within reach thanks to innovations in science and technology. The scientific community, regulators, public health experts, and civil society can accelerate change by objectively assessing the totality of evidence that underpins smoke-free products and the potential they represent for those adults who continue to smoke. Advancing science and knowledge on nicotine and tobacco through open dialogue is vital to achieving this shared goal and delivering on the promise of

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.intervals.science/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2468111317300348>

<sup>3</sup> [PMI Integrated Report 2020](#)



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science-backed, better choices for smokers. On behalf of PMI and for the benefit of a democratic society that encourages debate among all stakeholders, I urge you and your members to reconsider your decision.

With kind regards,



Dr. Manuel Peitsch  
Chief Scientific Officer