

## Tobacco Harm Reduction

► **C-stores can embrace harm reduction to drive smokeless sales**

By **Brad Rodu**



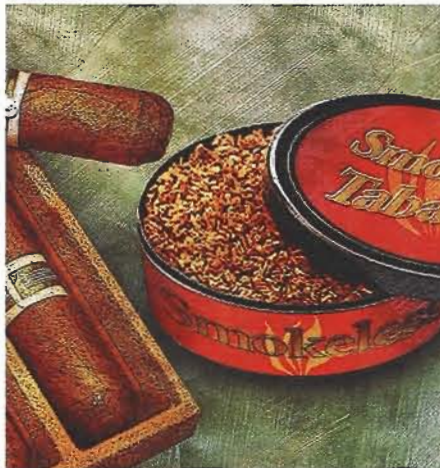
Brad Rodu is Professor of Medicine, Endowed Chair, Tobacco Harm Reduction Research, at the University of Louisville.

**"T**ake a pouch instead of a puff." That was an advertising slogan in the 1980s, inviting smokers to try smokeless tobacco products. The slogan, widely condemned by health activists on the grounds that it portrayed smokeless as safer than smoking, was eventually dropped by the company under threat from a state attorney general.

Today, 20 years later, that message has re-emerged in a revolutionary new concept: tobacco harm reduction. It is now endorsed by a growing number of progressive and enlightened public health activists who are frustrated by the failed "quit-or-die" policies of anti-tobacco extremists. Tobacco harm reduction advocates cite scientific proof that smokeless products are safer alternatives for smokers who are unable or unwilling to quit nicotine and tobacco altogether. Smokeless products are poised to replace cigarettes for many Americans because they're safer, they satisfy smokers' nicotine cravings, and many are essentially spit-free.

There's no doubt that smokeless products are vastly safer than cigarettes. Britain's Royal College of Physicians, one of the world's most prestigious medical societies, concluded that "the consumption of non-combustible [smokeless] tobacco is on the order of 10 to 1,000 times less hazardous than smoking..." and a study sponsored by the National Cancer Institute found smoke-

less products to be 90 percent safer than cigarettes. Unlike cigarettes, smokeless use doesn't cause lung cancer, heart disease or emphysema. The only risk is mouth cancer, and even that risk is far lower among smokeless users than among smokers. How low? Statistically, long-time smokeless users have about the same risk of



dying from mouth cancer as automobile users have of dying in a car wreck.

Many smokers know that nicotine is powerfully addictive, but they wrongly believe that nicotine is the killer. In fact, nicotine itself is about as safe as caffeine, another widely consumed addictive drug. It's the other 3,000 agents in tobacco smoke that are responsible for the diseases that kill smokers. Smokers who switch permanently to other, safer forms of nicotine, including smokeless tobacco products, live longer and healthier lives. And they don't pollute the air around them, making smokeless products viable options for smoke-free offices and other environments.

Newer smokeless tobacco products can be used almost invisibly, since spitting is nonexistent. They're often available as wafers or small pellets and are flavored with peppermint or cinnamon. Some are the size of breath mints and completely dissolve during use, leaving no tobacco residue. They have names like Oliver Twist ([www.oliver-twist.com/](http://www.oliver-twist.com/), House of Oliver Twist); Revel ([www.revel.com](http://www.revel.com), U.S. Smokeless Tobacco Co.); Catch ([www.swedishsnus.com](http://www.swedishsnus.com), Swedish Match); Ariva, Stonewall ([www.goariva.com](http://www.goariva.com), [www.hardsnuff.com](http://www.hardsnuff.com), Star Tobacco Co.); Camel ([www.camelsnus.com](http://www.camelsnus.com), RJ Reynolds Tobacco Co.); and Taboka ([www.philipmorrisusa.com](http://www.philipmorrisusa.com), Philip Morris USA).

Safer, satisfying and spit-free are the key ingredients for a modern American revolution in tobacco use. But there's one missing link: informed consumers. Most smokers don't realize that they have these new healthier options. That's largely because a powerful anti-tobacco movement has been working to prevent smokers from learning the truth about smokeless products. Convenience store owners, their associates, and their smoking customers deserve access to accurate information about tobacco products, and they can find it at the University of Louisville-based research Web site, [www.smokersonly.org](http://www.smokersonly.org). ■

*Editor's Note: The opinions expressed in this article do not reflect the views of Convenience Store News. They are the author's opinion.*