New Zealand Medical Journal Publishes Letter Recommending 22nd Century’s Very Low Nicotine Cigarettes as Important Smoking Reduction Tool

"Nicotine content of cigarettes should be reduced to very low levels so that they are less addictive." Pragmatic Public Policy Approach May Help Dramatically Reduce NZ Smoking Prevalence by 2025

CLARENCE, N.Y.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--22nd Century Group, Inc. (NYSE MKT: XXII), a plant biotechnology company that is a leader in tobacco harm reduction, announced today that on February 19, 2016, Dr. Murray Laugesen and Dr. Randolph C. Grace published a letter in The New Zealand Medical Journal, Volume 129, Number 1430, advocating for introduction of 22nd Century’s Very Low Nicotine cigarettes in New Zealand at a favorable tax rate.

Professors in the Department of Psychology at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, New Zealand, Drs. Laugesen and Grace, addressed their letter to the Ministry of Health and to tobacco policy advocates in New Zealand. Their letter advocates implementing 22nd Century’s Very Low Nicotine tobacco cigarettes as a cornerstone tool in New Zealand’s efforts to drastically reduce smoking prevalence in New Zealand by the year 2025. 22nd Century recently launched MAGIC 0 Very Low Nicotine cigarettes in Europe and the Company submitted to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in December 2015 a Modified Risk Tobacco Product application for BRAND A Very Low Nicotine cigarettes. The New Zealand movement reflects growing international enthusiasm for reducing nicotine levels in cigarettes to non-addictive levels.

Dr. Laugesen and Dr. Grace recommend, among other things, that Very Low Nicotine cigarettes be subject to reduced excise taxes to encourage consumers in New Zealand to switch brands. What follows is an excerpt from their letter as published in The New Zealand Medical Journal:

Reducing nicotine content of cigarettes. We draw attention to a review in the area, three ground-breaking studies and a recent public survey showing wide support for very low nicotine content (VLNC) cigarettes. This method could (over 2017-2020) be used to reduce excise [taxes] on VLNC cigarettes by 20% to 2014 levels, making these the preferred price alternative. These cigarettes are available from 22nd Century USA. Nicotine in VLNC tobacco would reduce by 90% or more, smoking would greatly reduce, and many would quit.

a. 2009/10 Walker et al., undertook a pragmatic community-based randomised trial (n=1,410) in NZ in which Quitline [a New Zealand stop-smoking group] callers were randomised to receive either VLNC cigarettes to use whenever they had an urge to smoke for up to 6 weeks after their quit date, in combination with usual Quitline care (8 weeks of NRT patches and/or gum or lozenges, plus behavioural support) or to usual Quitline care alone. Participants in the [VLNC] intervention group were more likely to have quit smoking at 6 months compared to those in the usual care group, and were less likely to relapse back to smoking.

b. 2014 Walker et al., undertook a pragmatic community-based randomised trial (n=33) in Central Otago among cigarette smokers unmotivated to quit. Among those smoking VLNC cigarettes (<0.7 mg [nicotine content] tobacco) they reduced cigarette consumption, reduced nicotine exposure, and increased quitting.

c. 2015 Donny et al., conducted a randomised trial within the USA with 780 smokers unmotivated to quit. They showed that those randomised to smoke very low VLNC cigarettes (0.4 mg-2.4 mg [nicotine content] per cigarette) rather than standard-nicotine cigarettes (5 mg-15 mg of nicotine per cigarette), reduced their nicotine exposure, nicotine dependency, and cigarettes per day (from 20 to 15). They reported little evidence of any negative effects (including compensatory smoking) and that participants were more likely to try to quit during follow up.

d. On 8 January 2016 the Health Promotion Agency reported that adults (n=2,594) showed wide support (81% of those surveyed, 63% of smokers, and all age, sex and ethnicity groups) for the concept that “nicotine content of cigarettes should be reduced to very low levels so that they are less addictive.” A policy along these lines has the support of the NZ public.

“To drastically reduce smoking rates in their country by 2025, New Zealand scientists and government policy advocates are demonstrating uncommon public policy pragmatism,” explained Henry Sicignano, III, President and Chief Executive Officer of 22nd Century Group. “22nd Century stands ready to provide our Company’s proprietary Very Low Nicotine cigarettes to New Zealand and to all other countries who desire to reduce the harm caused by smoking.”

About 22nd Century Group, Inc.

22nd Century is a plant biotechnology company focused on technology which allows it to increase or decrease the level of nicotine in tobacco plants and the level of cannabinoids in cannabis plants through genetic engineering and plant breeding. The Company’s primary mission is to reduce the harm caused by smoking. 22nd Century currently owns or exclusively controls more than 200 issued patents and more than 50 pending patent applications around the world. The Company’s strong IP position led to a licensing agreement with British American Tobacco (“BAT”), the world’s second largest tobacco company. Visit www.xxcentury.com and www.magiccigarettes.com for more information.

Cautionary Note Regarding Forward-Looking Statements: This press release contains forward-looking information, including all statements that are not statements of historical fact regarding the intent, belief or current expectations of 22nd Century Group, Inc., its directors or its officers with respect to the contents of this press release, including but not limited to our future revenue expectations. The words “may,” “would,” “will,” “expect,” “estimate,” “anticipate,” “believe,” “intend” and similar expressions and variations thereof are intended to identify forward-looking statements. We cannot guarantee future results, levels of activity or performance. You should not place undue reliance on these forward-looking statements, which speak only as of the date that they were made. These cautionary statements should be considered with any written or oral forward-looking statements that we may issue in the future. Except as required by applicable law, including the securities laws of the United States, we do not intend to update any of the forward-looking statements to conform these statements to reflect actual results, later
events or circumstances, or to reflect the occurrence of unanticipated events. You should carefully review and consider the various disclosures made by us in our annual report on Form 10-K for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2015, filed on February 18, 2016, including the section entitled “Risk Factors,” and our other reports filed with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission which attempt to advise interested parties of the risks and factors that may affect our business, financial condition, results of operation and cash flows. If one or more of these risks or uncertainties materialize, or if the underlying assumptions prove incorrect, our actual results may vary materially from those expected or projected.


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