

Dear Fellow CAStoR Members,

We are excited to be now in the fourth year of CAStoR. A great many things and challenges have happened during Year 3, and we again just wanted to take a brief moment to thank you for all your contributions, and share some of our accomplishments and plans for the next year.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Publications**

Through its numerous publications that have received both national and international attention, CAStoR investigators continue to make a significant impact on the field of tobacco control and regulation. Since 2019, CAStoR has had over 50 publications, with over 20 published during our past funding period. Two of our most recent publications: 1) "[Consequences of a match made in hell: the harm caused by menthol smoking to the African American population over 1980–2018](#)", Mendez, et al and 2) "[Public health impact of a US ban on menthol in cigarettes and cigars: a simulation study](#)", Levy, et al, published in Tobacco Control respond directly to the FDA request to provide more scientific evidence on the public health impact of menthol.

In addition, the newly released publication [Estimated Prevalence of Smoking and Smoking-Attributable Mortality Associated With Graphic Health Warnings on Cigarette Packages in the US From 2022 to 2100](#), Tam, et al, published in JAMA Health Forum is another example of CAStoR investigators significantly contributing to the public health dialogue surrounding the impact of tobacco regulations and of delays in the implementation of such regulations.

All of these publications, which were received with much interest by the tobacco control community, highlight the impact that CAStoR is having in shaping tobacco control and regulation in the US. Many more papers, including seminal work on polytobacco use patterns, tobacco product use transitions, and tobacco use trends, have been published recently or are currently under review. You can find out more about these and other Center achievements on our [website](#).

- **Events**

CAStoR hosted its first symposium, *Simulation Modeling in Tobacco Regulatory Science: Where are we and where should we go next?*, June 7-9, 2021. The symposium initially planned for 2020 had been delayed due to the pandemic, but we are delighted to report it was held this year as a virtual event, and was a tremendous success. Keynote speakers for the event were Dr. Kenneth Warner and FDA Director, Mitch Zeller. The event featured sessions on research gaps in tobacco regulation which modeling can address innovative approaches to generate model parameters, and future directions in tobacco modeling. Over 100 individuals, including non-modelers in TRS, NIH and federal partners and trainees attended the event. See presentation videos from all 3-days of the event, along with the final proceedings on our [CAStoR website](#)

- **Scholarship/Pilots**

In July 2021 CAStoR investigators Drs. Meza and Jeon, once again taught a one-week online summer course, "EPID 730 Simulation Modeling of Tobacco Use, Health Effects and Policy Impacts." CAStoR was able to provide

funding to 20 individuals to take the course, fourteen of whom were also funded to take an additional one-week related course, “EPID 793 Complex Systems Modeling for Public Health Research.” Across the 2-years the course has been offered, CAsToR has provided scholarship to over 40 attendees, representing different stages in their careers. Students expressed very high satisfaction with the course structure, content and materials and evaluated it as exceptional. We look forward to the continued success of these courses and the ability to continue to reach out and develop future modelers and researchers.

CAsToR also continued our incredibly successful pilot-funding program; with funding an additional, [five pilot projects](#) for the upcoming 2021-2022 funding year, bringing our total investment in pilot projects to over **\$600,000**. The new pilot projects include a diverse range of topics as well as a diverse range of awardees, including three Assistant Professors, one Doctoral Student and one Postdoctoral Research Fellow. Awarded pilots include topics, ranging from content analysis of electronic cigarette advertisements, to disparities in flavoring patterns, and trajectories of tobacco use.

The ongoing success of our pilot program is indeed a highlight for the CAsToR. Through this program, we offer financial resources, professional mentorship, and long-term collaboration. The impact of the pilot program on future TRS investigators is evident in the progress of our funded pilot awardees advancing their research. Examples of the pilot awardee's achievements include 2019 pilot awardee, Krishna Reddy, receiving funding for two NIH RO1s and 2020 pilot awardee, Eric Soule, receiving funding for an NIH R15 award.

Last, CAsToR accomplishments are due to our amazing team of Investigators, Researchers, Students and Staff. Over the past year, we have been fortunate to bring on additional CAsToR members, which have tremendously enriched our center and our work. New members include Research Scientist, James Buszkiewicz, Postdoctoral Research Fellows Mona Issabakhsh, Alex Liber, and Pianpian Cao, Masters in Computational Epidemiology and Systems Modeling student Rossana Alvarez and Graduate Students Shuqi Wang and Tianmin Wu.

PLANS

We are excited about our year 4 plans, which include publication of the findings from our Year 3 Rapid Response Proposal evaluating the health effects of ENDS and cigarette smoking in the PATH study, continuing our modeling and analyses of tobacco use patterns, and the launch of a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), “Tobacco Use and Control: A Contextual Framework.” The MOOC, will provide a broad introduction to tobacco control for graduate students in health-related fields; federal, state and local government employees engaged in public health and/or tobacco control work; and not-for-profit officials.

Our Year 4 Rapid Response Proposal, “Modeling the Behavioral and Public Health Impacts of ENDS Flavor Restrictions”, will enhance our ongoing research. Our proposal will estimate the public health impact of a US flavor restrictions on ENDS using systematic reviews, epidemiological studies, expert consultations and tobacco simulation modeling.

Thank you for being a part of CAsToR,

Rafael Meza and David Levy on behalf of CAsToR’s leadership