

U of A refuses tobacco-sponsored scholarship donation

The University of Alberta has turned down a donation of nearly \$500 000 from an undisclosed tobacco manufacturer while it debates the ethics of accepting such gifts. In a closed session, the university's Board of Governors voted not to accept the donation, which was to be used for scholarships.

Action on Smoking and Health (ASH), Western Canada's largest antitobacco lobby group, wants the university to adopt a policy refusing all tobacco company sponsorship, as the University of British Columbia has already done. "Universities should serve as healthy role models to the community," said ASH Executive Director Les Hagen. "It's a slippery slope to [tobacco industry] funding of research."

The University of Toronto, McGill and the University of Calgary have all accepted funding from Imasco Ltd., which owns Imperial Tobacco, says Hagen. Calgary used Imasco money to help fund a Faculty of Nursing learning centre. "The tobacco industry is very adept at getting in," says Hagen. "We have to be forever vigilant."— *Barbara Sibbald, CMAJ*