

# RUSSIAN CIGARETTES

## QUICK STATS

- ✘ **CONFERENCE:** Spending
- ✘ **TEAM:** National Institutes of Health
- **FUMBLE:** \$48,500 to study the history of tobacco use in Russia
- **HOW TO RECOVER THE BALL:** Utilize resources to provide greater public health outcomes

NIH's stated mission is "to seek fundamental knowledge about the nature and behavior of living systems and the application of that knowledge to enhance health, lengthen life, and reduce illness and disability."<sup>53</sup> Perhaps running counter to the mission, in April 2015 NIH announced a \$48,500 grant to produce a book entitled, *Cigarettes and Soviets: The Culture of Tobacco Use in Modern Russia*.<sup>54</sup> While the title harkens images of a James Bond movie, the grant will go to pay a historian to write "the first solo-authored monograph in Russian or English to explore the history of tobacco use and government-initiated cessation programs in Russia in the context of the country's complex social, cultural, and political changes of the past 130 years."<sup>55</sup>

In order to compile the book, the author will "reconstruct the culture of tobacco using newspapers, journals, industry publications, etiquette manuals, propaganda posters, popular literature, films, cartoons, and advertising images." The supposed hook into NIH and public health relevance is that

"understanding Russia's distinctive history may suggest different strategies for U.S. policy initiatives" and that it can "provide insights into the successes and failures of government-led tobacco control efforts." While subjective, it is likely that most taxpayers would find the merits of the history of Russian smoking habits outside the scope of NIH's mission and American national interests.<sup>56</sup>

## RECOVERY

Recently NIH made major medical advances in Ebola research, gene therapy to treat hemophilia, blood tests for early detection of Alzheimer's. Four men even regained muscle control from paralysis after spinal stimulation therapy.<sup>57</sup> These advances truly make a difference and help families across the nation. Instead of funding the publication of niche history books, Congress should push NIH to continue to concentrate its resources on more transformative research to provide public health breakthroughs for the American people. Leave the study of Russian cigarettes to the Russians.

**[For more information, please visit:](#)**

[NIH: Mission and Goals](#)

[Grantome: Cigarettes and Soviets: The Culture of Tobacco Use in Modern Russia](#)

[NIH Office of History: Selected Research Advances of NIH](#)