Secondhand Smoke Exposure in Airports across Europe and the U.S.: An Observation-based Study

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• Flight attendants and travelers have been protected from secondhand smoke (SHS) exposure on board airplanes since 2000
• Most airports in Europe and the U.S. now have restrictive smoking policies but little is known about compliance and enforcement
• Individuals experience more exposure to SHS in airports with less restrictive smoking policies, such as those that allow smoking near entrances and indoor designated smoking rooms (DSRs)

Background
• We conducted a cross-sectional observational study from March-May 2014
• Twenty-one large and mid-sized airports in the U.S. and Europe were selected on a convenience basis
• Following a standardized protocol, we observed smoking (including e-cigarettes), signage and compliance related to airport smoking policies
• We defined evidence of smoking as observing any of the following: ≥1 smoker, presence of cigarette butts or used ashtrays and smell of tobacco smoke
• We divided airports into four distinct areas for observation: departures (outdoor and indoor), arrivals (outdoor and indoor), pre-security (indoor) and post-security (indoor)

Methods
• We conducted a cross-sectional observational study from March-May 2014
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Results
• 52 percent of airports (11) contained DSRs, of which several had doors propped open and ventilation malfunctions
• 10 percent of airports (2) observed (Philadelphia and Istanbul) had someone smoking indoors who was not in a DSR
• 48 percent of airports (10) had visible smoking policy signage in >2 of the four observed areas
• 71 percent of airports (15) contained evidence of smoking in ≥1 of the four observed areas
• Outdoor evidence of smoking was widespread at all airports, even those with smoking zones clearly marked on the pavement
• Indoor evidence of smoking was mostly attributable to observation of butts, used ashtrays and smoking smell, with very few directly observed smokers

Conclusions
• The presence of tobacco smoking remains a problem in major airports around the U.S. and Europe
• These findings may suggest an occupational health risk for people that are required to spend extensive amounts of time in airports, such as frequent travelers, flight attendants and airport personnel
• Airports should be 100 percent smoke-free indoors with DSRs removed

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