



Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
Atlanta GA 30333

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Dear Dr. Rodu:

Thank you for your letter expressing your concern about the use of the term, "spit tobacco," in a recent publication from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). Please excuse the delay of this response.

We use a number of criteria to determine the specific term that will be used to describe a behavior when there are several possibilities from which to choose. The term should be accurate, clear, understandable, and certainly objective, neither promoting nor denigrating the behavior being reported. Generally, the publications which present findings from our data systems utilize the same terms as in the data collection instruments to ensure consistency. Another term may occasionally be used to increase the public's understanding or to match other presentations on the topic. Despite these criteria and processes, an inappropriate term was used in this report (not the questionnaire).

We agree that the term, "smokeless tobacco," as used in the questionnaires in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey would provide a better description of the information and we will take swift action to make that change. A revised version of the Advance Data Report Number 378, "Smoking and Alcohol Behaviors Reported by Adults: United States, 1999-2002," will be posted on NCHS' website. The printed version of this report will be changed should we reprint in the future.

We appreciate your bringing this matter to our attention. The thoughtful review and use of our data certainly contribute to maintaining high standards of quality. I hope this information is helpful.

Sincerely,


Julie Louise Gerberding, M.D., M.P.H.
Director