

University of Edinburgh wants minimum pricing for cigarettes

Researchers at the University of Edinburgh say that introducing minimum pricing for tobacco products would improve the health of people living in economically disadvantaged areas.

They want The Scottish Government to increase the price of the cheapest cigarettes to help reduce smoking related disease.

The average purchase price was 50p less for a pack of 20 and 34p less for loose tobacco in areas with the lowest average household income than in other more affluent areas. Researchers say that the likelihood of smoking is related to cost, so increasing cost could be key to some people stopping smoking.

A team of researchers from the Universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow and East Anglia investigated how tobacco price varied in Scottish convenience stores. They compared retail price with neighbourhood income deprivation and whether the shop was in a rural or urban setting.

Researchers analysed more than 120,000 purchases in some 270 stores during one week in April 2018.

The study was funded by NHS Health Scotland and is published in the journal, *Tobacco Control*: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/tobaccocontrol-2019-055484>

Professor Niamh Shortt, of the Centre for Research on Society, Environment and Health at the University of Edinburgh, said: "Cheap tobacco products are clearly very important in

maintaining high levels of smoking particularly in the most deprived areas, which in turn entrench health inequalities. This study should add to policy discussions around tobacco retail interventions including the potential of a Minimum Unit Price on tobacco products.”