Health groups: Movies with smoking should be rated R
by Melissa Jenco, News Content Editor

The Academy and 16 other public health and medical groups are calling for movies that depict smoking to have an R rating.

The move could lead to an 18% decrease in teen smoking and 1 million fewer tobacco deaths, according to a recent report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

"As physicians and advocates, we are speaking with a unified voice: Filmmakers must stop enabling the tobacco industry to target our children," said AAP President Fernando Stein, M.D., FAAP. "The evidence is clear that when children see movie characters smoking, they are more likely to smoke."

About 26% of movies rated G, PG or PG-13 depict tobacco use, according to the CDC, while about 90% of smokers start by age 18.

The health and medical groups, representing more than 630,000 doctors, sent a letter to film industry leaders this week calling for them to stop showing smoking in child-rated films by June 1, 2018. AAP policy makes a similar recommendation.

The groups suggested an exception for films that "exclusively portray actual people who used tobacco (as in documentaries or biographical dramas) or that depict the serious health consequences of tobacco use."

In addition to the Academy, the letter was signed by the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American College of Physicians, the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American Medical Association, the American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, American Lung Association, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, American Public Health Association, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, Americans for Nonsmokers Rights, Breathe California Sacramento Region, Los Angeles County Health Agency, Smokefree Movies, Trinity Health and Truth Initiative.

"Cigarette smoking is the leading cause of cancer mortality, responsible for approximately 30% of all cancer deaths in America," said Gary Reedy, CEO of the American Cancer Society. "Most smokers are enticed into nicotine addiction as children, and the American film industry must take assertive action now to ensure that our kids are not lured into using this uniquely lethal product by depictions of smoking in major motion pictures."

Resources
- AAP Julius B. Richmond Center of Excellence
- AAP policy "Clinical Practice Policy to Protect Children From Tobacco, Nicotine, and Tobacco Smoke"
- University of California San Francisco research on smoking in movies