

# Tobacco Industry Pharmaceuticalization Strategies. Vectura and Philip Morris

“the leopard has not changed its spots”

From ‘Harm Reduction’ to Corporate Capture: How Tobacco Industry Marketing and  
Pharmaceutical Acquisitions Are Reshaping Public Health Policy.

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## Mergers and acquisitions

This article is more than 4 years old

### Health charities voice concern at Philip Morris's £1bn bid for Vectura

Tobacco company's interest in asthma inhaler maker triggers rare quickfire auction

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Bid announced July 2021 – complete September 2021

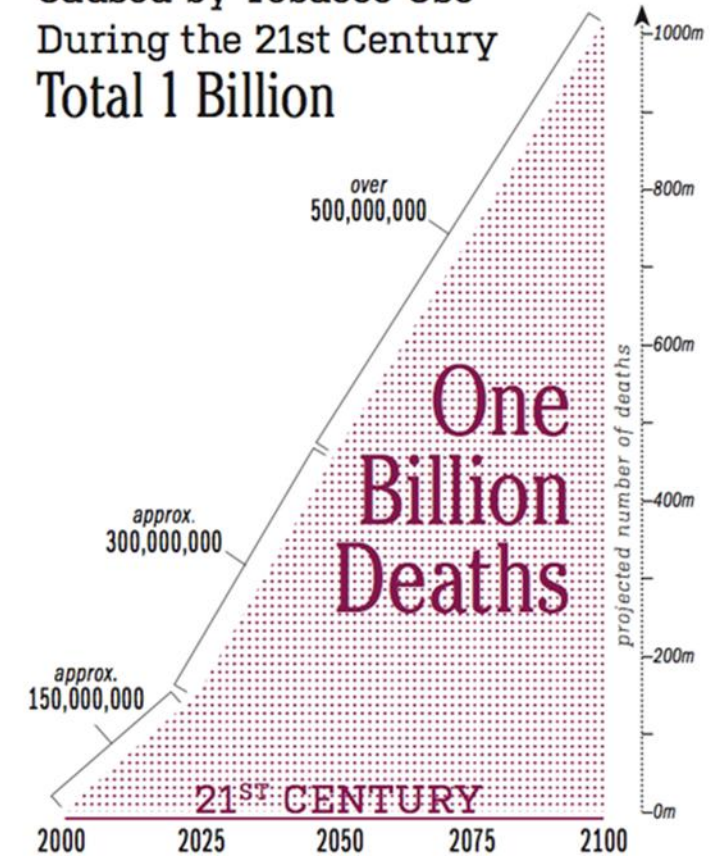
- Why?
- What did we do?
- What happened?
- What are the lessons?



# Why buy Vectura?

- Because it can – business model (causing cancer for profit) is extremely lucrative.
- Diversify ahead of anticipated fall in smoking
  - Inhaled nicotine
  - Cannabis
  - Obstruct rivals
- Launder reputation
- Sow dissent

Projected Deaths  
Caused by Tobacco Use  
During the 21st Century  
Total 1 Billion



# Response: opposition - denormalisation

- Statements from professional organisations (BTS, ERS) to make clear this was unacceptable
- Publications/news stories (BMJ, Lancet, Guardian etc)
- Government lobbied to block deal
- Pharma lobbied to block deal
- Vectura will become part of tobacco industry and treated as such (FCTC Art 5.3 etc)

# Adapting Inhaled Medication Practice in COPD and Asthma to Avoid Funding the Tobacco Industry

Dovepress

Capstick and Hopkinson



Inhaler devices listed in the Vectura accounts as generating revenue, or income from “royalty & other marketed revenues

Figure 1 Inhaler devices listed in the Vectura accounts as generating revenue, or income from “royalty & other marketed revenues”: <https://www.vectura.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Vectura-Group-plc-Annual-Report-and-Accounts-2020.pdf>– clockwise from top left: Novartis Breezhalers, Mundipharma Flutiform k-haler, Sandoz AirFluSal Forspiro, GSK, Ellipta inhalers.



## British Thoracic Society Statement on Philip Morris International's takeover of Vectura

Vectura, a company that for over 20 years has worked to treat lung disease, is now part of the tobacco industry. This is inappropriate, unethical and should have been prevented. The society's policy in relation to the tobacco industry<sup>14</sup> remains clear :

- In relation to the tobacco industry, BTS will work with colleagues in this country and overseas to combat misinformation about, and the active promotion of, tobacco products, as well as highlighting that tobacco industry funding for academic institutions or research is unacceptable.
- BTS membership is not open to those who have, or have had, paid involvement with tobacco industry at any point in the previous 10 years.
- Any company with links to the tobacco industry will not be approved for participation (eg, as exhibitors) in any society conference or meeting.
- Furthermore, publication of papers funded (wholly or in part) by the tobacco industry in the society's journals, *Thorax* and *BMJ Open Respiratory Research*, is specifically prohibited.

# Firm enforcement of policies excluding the tobacco industry



- on the day that the takeover was announced, Vectura was expelled from participation and sponsorship of two conferences on inhaler science.
- Academic speakers stating that they could not attend if Vectura continued to be involved.

## Inhaler firm Vectura removed from conference over Philip Morris takeover

Academics object to UK company's sponsorship of pharmaceutical event after tobacco giant seals £1.1bn deal



# Patient voice

## Inhalers for asthma, COPD, and other lung conditions – links to the tobacco industry

The aim of this leaflet is to provide information to people with asthma, COPD and other lung conditions who are taking inhaled medications and are concerned about the recent takeover of Vectura by Philip Morris International.



British  
Thoracic  
Society



UKCPA  
CLINICAL PHARMACY ASSOCIATION

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SOCIETY**

n

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just\_TUX · Aug 14

If this take over goes ahead I will refuse to use my Relvar inhaler. The ellipta device is made by Ventura.

2nd hand smoke has put me in ICU so many times. I am not ok with using a device that is associated with a tobacco company @lungscotland



bbc.co.uk

UK inhaler firm Vectura backs £1bn bid by Marlboro-maker

# 2024: “Phillip Morris sell Vectura after academic freeze-out”

PMI Chief Executive Officer Jacek Olczak: selling Vectura would release it from the “unreasonable burden of external constraints and criticism related to our ownership”.

“**unwarranted opposition** to PMI’s transformation has impacted Vectura’s scientific engagement and commercial CDMO [contract development and manufacturing organisation] relationships”.





ERS

## Ethics prevail where regulations failed: PMI sells pharmaceutical company Vectura at a loss

Dr Filippos Filippidos, Chair the ERS Tobacco Control

Committee: *“Though we had hoped, alongside other like-minded organisations, to influence UK regulators to intervene and make such a purchase impossible before it happened, we are pleased to see that the ethical response to PMI’s ownership of Vectura has resulted in this ‘offloading’.*

*It serves as a deterrent, but it doesn’t guarantee that another acquisition similar to this would not happen in the future. ERS therefore still calls for firm regulations to be put in place.”*

# Lessons

- Vigilance
- Clear rejection
- Systematic institutional policies to exclude tobacco industry
- Reject “two industries” narrative
- Collateral consequences
- Appropriate response
  - is prevent re-normalisation
  - demand reparations
  - payment for externalities “no profit in tobacco”

