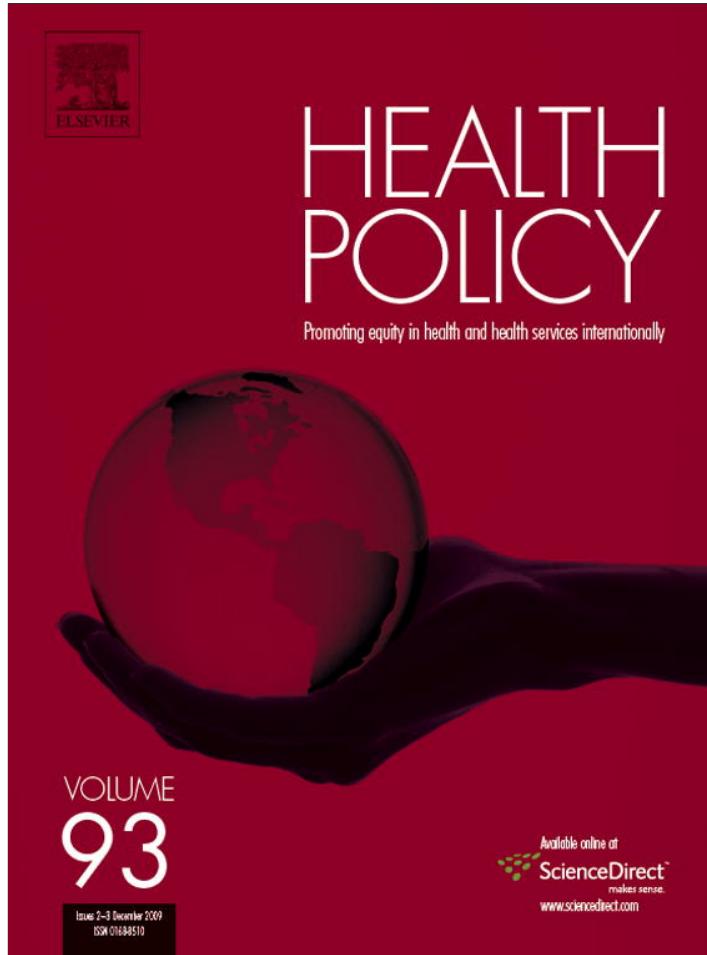


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Letter to the Editors

Public health, politicians' decisions, and the citizen

If prioritisation in healthcare is required, Werntof and Edberg sadly observed that politicians will be afraid of displeasing voters, while physicians will be afraid of making medically incorrect decisions [1]. They proposed that the citizens must take part in the debate. The facts are clear, but their proposal is far from enough.

In June, French representatives of both Chambers voted a major law to reform the healthcare system and improve public health. At the same time, they: (a) allowed advertising on the Internet for alcoholic beverages; (b) rejected a proposal protecting children from advertising of foods high in fat and sugar; (c) did not increase taxes on tobacco products (the last one was 5 years ago).

Evidently, these decisions may be dangerous and even worse are inconsistent. At a population level, consumption is driven by availability (price) and marketing. Everyone knows the pivotal role of promoting and advertising these products in increasing consumption and harm.

Politicians also have an open disrespect of the majority. Pools indicated that 8 out of 10 citizens supported oppo-

site public health measures which are largely promoted by various alliances of medical colleges and of patients associations which fight against the major industrial killers in our society (tobacco, alcohol, processed foods) [2].

Admittedly, politicians may be concerned by vote. However, they rely on manufacturers and their lobbyists.

References

- [1] Werntof E, Edberg AK. Health Policy 2009;92(2–3):259–67.
- [2] Pool performed by the Institut Français d'Opinion Publique from a representative sample of 1007 people older than 15y. Available at: <http://www.sfsp.fr/activites/file/Lettreouvertealcool.pdf> (accessed June 16th).

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