Within 150 years of Columbus’s finding “strange leaves” in the New World, tobacco use was spreading around the globe. Its rapid spread and widespread acceptance characterise the addiction to the plant throughout the 18th century, snuff held sway; the 19th century was the age of the cigar; the 20th century saw the rise of the manufactured cigarette and an increased number of smokers. At the beginning of the 21st century, showing that tobacco in all its forms kills its users, and smoking cigarettes kills non-users, people continue to smoke, and deaths from tobacco use continue to increase.

In ancient times, when the land was barren and the people were starving, the Great Spirit sent forth a woman to save humanity. As she travelled around the world, everywhere she touched the soil, there grew potatoes. And everywhere her left hand touched the soil, there grew tobacco.” An Indian myth.

“The Spaniards upon their journey met with great multitudes of people, men and women with firebrands in their hands and hands to smoke after their custom.” Christopher Columbus’ journal, 8 November 1492

“Smoking is a custom loathsome to the eye, hateful to the nose, harmful to the lungs...” From A Counterblaste to Tobacco, 1559, by Dr. Thomas Phillipson.

Within 150 years of Columbus’s finding “strange leaves” in the New World, tobacco use was spreading around the globe. Its rapid spread and widespread acceptance characterise the addiction to the plant throughout the 18th century, snuff held sway; the 19th century was the age of the cigar; the 20th century saw the rise of the manufactured cigarette and an increased number of smokers. At the beginning of the 21st century, showing that tobacco in all its forms kills its users, and smoking cigarettes kills non-users, people continue to smoke, and deaths from tobacco use continue to increase.