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PROGRAM News 7: The 6:00 O'Clock Reports STATION WJLA TV  
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SUBJECT Pollin/Cigarette Smoking

RENEE POUSSAINT: The director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse says doctors should list cigarette smoking as a cause of death on death certificates. As News 7's Gary Axelson tells us, this latest attack on smoking comes just a month and a half after the federal government officially labeled cigarettes the country's leading preventable cause of death.

GARY AXELSON: The National Institute on Drug Abuse says the logic is irrefutable, that cigarette smoking is the cause of 350,000 needless deaths every year and that it is a severe physical addiction. The next step then, according to the Institute, is to get doctors to list smoking as a cause of death on death certificates. NIDA Director, Doctor William Pollin, says he hopes to see many physicians pick up on the notion.

DR. WILLIAM POLLIN: So we're talking about a substantial number of deaths where the drug dependence on tobacco, which an individual would have wanted to give up using nine times out of ten, regular users can't give up the use of. We're talking about a diagnosis which should be appearing with considerable frequency.

AXELSON: The labeling of cigarette smoking as a physical addiction, and listing it as a legal cause of death on a death certificate has another very important aspect. It could lay the foundation, the groundwork for successful wrongful death lawsuits against the tobacco industry. Now that industry says Pollin's talk about physical addiction is nonsense and that there's no evidence linking cigarettes to any disease.

DR. POLLIN: One would expect them to say that. But if

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one just looks at the volume of scientific reports put out by scientists who are not receiving support from the tobacco industry, there is just no question about this issue.

AXELSON: Pollin points to the World Health Organization's disagnostic manual which lists tobacco as an addiction, and the standard US diagnostic manual which says the same thing.

The Tobacco Institute also says government pamphlets warning people that tobacco is a physical addiction are a waste of tax money. Pollin sees it differently. He sees the money as a critical investment, especially in the health of the young.

This is Gary Axelson, News 7.

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