

F. LICKINT

Tabak und Organismus



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Dr. Fritz Lickint, M.D., (1898-1960) was an internist, a social democrat and Germany's foremost exponent of the antismoking message, who investigated scientifically health problems and social problems related to alcohol and tobacco. In 1925 he published about an increase of gastric ulcer and stomach cancer in smokers. All his life Lickint was an engaged social democrat and member of the union "social democratic physicians". Because of his anti-nazi political attitude, he lost his job at the Chemnitz hospital in 1934.

Dr. Lickint was one of the first physicians describing physical and psychological tobacco dependence as a disease, which needs treatment, suggesting a number of therapies (part of them still in use). He also pointed to the "anti-social behavior of many smokers, polluting ambient air recklessly and harming health of other people". Lickint created the term "passive smoking".

In his monumental *Tabak und Organismus* (Tobacco and the organism), published in 1939, Dr. Lickint chronicled an extraordinary range of ills deriving from smoking, chewing, or snorting tobacco. The 1,200-page volume is arguably the most comprehensive scholarly indictment of tobacco in the 20th century. Surveying 8,000 publications worldwide, the author blamed tobacco for cancers all along the Rauchstrasse--lips, tongue, lining of the mouth, jaw, esophagus, windpipe, and lungs. Tobacco was an instigator not just of cancer but of arteriosclerosis, infant mortality, ulcers, halitosis, and dozens of other maladies. Dr. Lickint identified tobacco as a very powerful drug: tobacco addiction he characterized as Nikotinismus (or, more properly, Tabakismus), and tobacco addicts as Nikotinisten (or Tabakisten); he also **compared tobacco addicts to morphine addicts**, and made a convincing argument that "passive smoking" (**Passivrauchen--he seems to have coined the term**) posed a serious threat to nonsmokers.

His was the most comprehensive review of the literature up to that time, while also presenting new statistical facts. His evidence was fairly simple, constituting what epidemiologists today call a "case-series" showing that lung cancer patients were particularly likely to be heavy smokers. Dr. Lickint's article served as a springboard for many subsequent investigators: Victor Mertens, Angel Roffo, and T. Chikamatsu, for example, all of whom demonstrated the carcinogenic potency of tobacco tar while crediting Lickint's pioneering vision.

This in turn earned him the title as the physician "most hated by the tobacco industry. Lickint argued that tobacco was highly addictive and that its usage was responsible for thousands of cancers in Germany.

Like other doctors at the time, Dr. Lickint also experimented with radical approaches to cure cancer such as x-raying the spleens of cancer patients in hopes of producing cancer-fighting hormones.

Dr. Lickint's body of work stands as a testament to a man who was extremely passionate about his cause of anti tobacco. His works are some of the most referenced studies regarding tobacco in the 20th century.