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BAT is accused of obstructing research

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The long fight between the medical profession and big tobacco companies steps up again today with accusations from leading public health scientists that British American Tobacco has blocked efforts to gain information from its archives in Guildford, Surrey.

BAT was required to provide access to its company documents, including scientific research into the effects of smoking on health, as part of the 1998 State of Minnesota settlement with the tobacco industry. But doctors in the UK complain it is difficult to obtain these documents, owing to inadequate searching facilities and over-active surveillance at the company's depository in Guildford. Richard Hurt, from the Mayo Clinic, argues in today's *Lancet* that the company's approach "amounts to concealing what is supposed to be public information contained in the Guildford depository".

Martin Broughton, BAT chairman, told parliament in 2000 that the company invested substantial resources in making the archive accessible to visitors. *Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota, US; www.mayo.edu*

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