Several associations of doctors, including Doctors for You and the Maharashtra Association of Resident Doctors (MARD) with the support of Tata Cancer Hospital, have shot off a strong letter to actor Sanjay Dutt, asking him to reconsider his decision to endorse gutkha and tobacco and quit smoking in 2011.

Dutt has been endorsing gutkha and pan masala for several years. The letter, in possession with this paper, says as someone who has "witnessed the pain of cancer very closely in his own family," he should "dissociate himself from such addictive and lethal substances." Dutt's mother Nargis Dutt was a cancer victim as was his former wife Richa Sharma. The doctors, while reminding the actor of his influence over young, impressionable minds also urged him to consider his late father Sunil Dutt's campaign against cancer.

Dr Pankaj Chaturvedi, associate professor at Tata Cancer Hospital, which also houses the Nargis Dutt ICU set up by Sunil Dutt, said, "Sanjay Dutt's family has battled with cancer. It surprised and shocked us to see him endorse cancer causing substances. He should remember, he is role model to our kids."

The doctor also said that India has the highest incidence of tobacco-related cancer in the world. "Nearly 20 lakh people die of cancer every year. These are facts Dutt should consider before continuing his association with such dangerous substances."

Dutt's official spokesman said, "It is an old commitment. He has not received the letter from the Association yet. But he respects doctors' advice and won't endorse further after the contract expires."