

# The Facts on Nurses and Smoking

## NURSES HELPING OTHERS TO QUIT

- Nurses make a difference in smoking cessation, increasing quitting success rates in both hospital and non-hospital settings.<sup>4</sup>
- Nursing-led interventions for smoking cessation increases by 50% the chances of successfully quitting.<sup>4</sup>
- In an outpatient setting, nurse-assisted counseling nearly doubled quit rates compared to physician advice alone.<sup>5</sup>
- 25% to 30% of nurses provide smoking cessation intervention to their patients.<sup>3</sup>
- Before nurses can fully realize their cessation intervention potential, tobacco cessation content and clinical skills in schools of nursing must be enhanced. A recent study found that less than 50% of undergraduate nursing programs in the U.S. provide clinical practice in this area, and less than 50% of undergraduate and graduate nursing programs use the Public Health Service guideline as a teaching tool.<sup>6</sup>

## NURSES WHO SMOKE

- 15% of Registered Nurses (RNs) smoke.<sup>7</sup> That's about 388,960 of the 2.6 million RNs in the U.S.
- Smoking among RNs is declining but is higher than the Healthy People 2010 goal of 12% sought for the general population. In 2002, 25% of men and 20% of women in the U.S. smoked.<sup>1</sup>
- 28% of Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) smoke.<sup>7</sup> Unlike RNs, smoking prevalence among LPNs has remained high.

- As in the general population, tobacco use among nurses varies by educational and socioeconomic background. Smoking is more prevalent in lower income strata and among those with fewer years of formal education.<sup>1</sup>
- Smoking varies by nursing specialty. Psychiatric (23%), Gerontology (18%) and Emergency nurses (18%) smoke more while Pediatric critical care nurses (8%) smoke less.<sup>8</sup> Seven percent of Oncology nurses smoke.<sup>9</sup>
- Some nurses are entering the profession as smokers. Reports of prevalence of smoking among nursing students vary from 6%<sup>10</sup> to 14%<sup>11</sup> to 24%.<sup>12</sup>

## NURSES AND SMOKING CESSATION

- Through participation in the Nurses Health Study, nurses have played a critical role in contributing to our knowledge of the morbidity and mortality caused by tobacco use among women.<sup>13</sup> However, efforts focused on assisting nurses with their own cessation have been limited.
- In the Nurses' Health Study, of the 24,326 nurses who were smokers in 1986, (and were still alive and provided smoking data in 1998), 52% had quit; 49% were still smoking.<sup>14</sup>
- Studies indicate that lack of support from coworkers has been associated with fewer quit attempts.<sup>15, 16, 17, 18</sup> Conversely, strong support for quitting has a positive impact.<sup>19, 20</sup>

**Fact:** In 2002, 22.5% of adults in the United States smoked.<sup>1</sup>

**Fact:** Smoking among adolescents remains high, with more than 4,000 children and adolescents becoming regular users of tobacco every day.<sup>2</sup>

**Fact:** If 100,000 clinicians were to help 10% of their patients who smoke to stop each year, the number of smokers in the United States would drop by an additional 2 million people annually.<sup>3</sup>

**Fact:** Smoking cessation interventions delivered by a variety of providers markedly increase cessation rates.<sup>3</sup>

**Fact:** 15.4 million people a year make a serious quit attempt.<sup>1</sup> If half of the current working population of 2.3 million registered nurses were to assist one patient per week to make a quit attempt, the number of quit attempts in the U.S. would increase by more than 59 million quit attempts per year.

**Fact:** Tobacco Free Nurses is the first national initiative to help nurses stop smoking and to empower them to engage in tobacco use prevention and cessation.

OVER ▶

TOBACCO  
*free*  
NURSES

# The Facts on Nurses and Smoking, continued

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