

Contact:

Gloria Meyer, 608-265-4447

gkm@ctri.medicine.wisc.edu

Chris Hollenback, 608-262-3902

Ch3@ctri.medicine.wisc.edu**For Release:****Tues, November 30, 2004**

WI Smokers Trying to Quit the Hard Way

Counseling and medication can make quitting easier

Madison--According to a new report on "How Wisconsin Smokers Quit," nearly one-half of Wisconsin smokers tried to quit smoking last year. Close to 8 out of 10 tried to quit "cold turkey" (without medication or counseling) and 90 percent relapsed within three months. Although new methods for quitting double or triple their chances for success, most Wisconsin smokers are still trying to quit the hard way.

The report, the first in a series based on the 2003 Wisconsin Tobacco Survey of over 8000 Wisconsin residents, concluded that smokers are making multiple, unsuccessful quit attempts and not using methods that are shown to increase quitting success. More than 50 percent of current Wisconsin smokers have made three or more tries at quitting smoking.

"We now have a number of medications and counseling strategies that can greatly increase quit rates—nicotine replacement therapies, Zyban, telephone counseling," said Dr. Michael Fiore, director of the UW Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention, one of the organizations releasing the report. "But many people are either unaware or cannot afford these treatments. As we approach New Year's resolutions to quit, smokers should see their doctors or call the Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line at 1-877-270-STOP to get help in quitting smoking."

“That 75 percent of smokers want to quit and most have made an attempt is very encouraging,” said Mark Zehner, the report’s lead author. The report found that more young adults are trying to quit compared to smokers over 65. “There may be signs of discouragement in smokers over 65 who were the least likely to have made a quit attempt.”

African Americans were more likely to have made a quit attempt in the previous year (63 percent) than Whites (46 percent) and they were more likely to try to quit “cold turkey” (92 percent vs. 78 percent for Whites).

“This paper indicates that we need to increase awareness of treatments that are approved and that work. We also need to encourage public and private health insurers to make treatments available,” said Fiore. “Through more research focusing on African Americans and the elderly, we can better assist them to quit smoking.”

Other papers in the series will address barriers to quitting, women and smoking, and clinician behavior and smoking status. The papers are based on the 2003 Wisconsin Tobacco Survey conducted with 8111 Wisconsin residents by the University of Wisconsin Survey Center for the UW Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention and UW Comprehensive Cancer Center. The Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services funded the survey and The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funded the publication of the report.

Copies of “How Wisconsin Smokers Quit” are available online at www.ctri.wisc.edu and www.tobwis.org.

The Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention, University of Wisconsin Medical School, has provided cessation and prevention services in Wisconsin since 1992 and is a nationally-recognized research center.