

UW-CTRI News Release

University of Wisconsin Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention

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Local Healthcare Providers Prepare to Help More Smokers Quit Experts Expect High Interest in Quitting If Smoking Ban, Cigarette Tax Pass

EAU CLAIRE – About 100 doctors, pharmacists, nurses and other healthcare professionals met today in Eau Claire to discuss the latest research and best practices to help patients quit smoking or chewing tobacco, sponsored by the state of Wisconsin and the UW Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention (UW-CTRI). Experts expect an increased demand for help with quitting smoking if the statewide smoking ban or cigarette tax increase is signed into law.

Higher Demand for Help with Quitting. If the legislature passes Gov. Jim Doyle's proposed cigarette tax increase of \$1.25 per pack, approximately 42,000 Wisconsin adults will quit smoking, and even more will make quit attempts, according to the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. Similarly, history shows a statewide smoking ban would also increase interest in quitting tobacco use. For example, a study in the *American Journal of Public Health* found that quit rates were 27 percent higher in areas across the country with smoking bans.

"The good news is about 70 percent of smokers already want to quit," said Dr. Michael Fiore, UW-CTRI director and one of four guest speakers at the event, held at the Best Western Trail Lodge & Suites. "And, even better, smokers don't have to go it alone; there's help. Doctors, dentists, pharmacists, nurses and other healthcare providers have a tremendous opportunity to help smokers quit."

While treatment for tobacco addiction has improved dramatically, Fiore said healthcare providers frequently don't provide their patients-who-smoke

Two Great Tools to Help People Quit Smoking

1) **Coaching.** See your doctor or call the Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line at 1-800-QUIT-NOW for free, confidential help.

2) **Medications.** Medications to quit smoking are available via prescription or over the counter.

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with the evidence-based treatments that can reduce the number-one cause of preventable death. The U.S. Clinical Practice Guideline: *Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence*, the gold standard for treating tobacco use, recommends assisting every patient who uses tobacco with how to quit at every doctor visit. This includes asking about it, advising patients to quit and assisting with medications and counseling. The need is still great because one out of every five Wisconsinites still smokes.

Assisting Specific Demographics. Smoking prevalence is even higher among certain demographics. For example, about half of those diagnosed with depression smoke, said Dr. Eric Heiligenstein, Clinical Director of Psychiatry Service at University Health Services in Madison and a guest speaker at the event. Eighty percent of alcoholics and 88 percent of people with schizophrenia or bipolar disorders smoke, he said. “But it’s not a hopeless cause,” said Dr. Heiligenstein. “If healthcare systems take a systematic approach to providing the right medications and counseling, we can help these patients quit and live healthier, longer lives.” He added that doctors can help patients quit at the same time they’re treating another physical or mental disease.

Clearing the Air. The event also focused on secondhand smoke. Dr. Michael Kretz, a Pierce/St. Croix tobacco coalition member, told attendees that the U.S. Surgeon General has made it clear that secondhand smoke is harmful to those who breathe it, even in small amounts. “It’s of particular concern among young children,” said Dr. Kretz, “because of the increased risk for asthma, upper-respiratory infections and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Smoking triggers a million asthmatic attacks and thousands of infant deaths every year.”

Ensuring the Best Care Across the Region. Most area clinics and health systems already treat tobacco use, but some of them are working to augment their treatment plans to ensure all patients who smoke get the help they need. Many are learning more about the latest medications or counseling techniques. Lezli Redmond, director of the UW-CTRI Outreach Program, said her staff works with healthcare providers to help them translate the latest research into quality care.

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The event was co-sponsored by UW-CTRI and the state of Wisconsin. UW-CTRI, part of the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, has provided cessation and prevention services in Wisconsin since 1992 and is a nationally recognized research center.

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