

WISCONSIN TOBACCO

QuitLine News Release

University of Wisconsin Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE July 9, 2007

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Operation Quit Tobacco Helps 300 Soldiers PROVIDES FREE MEDICATION AND COACHING TO MILITARY PERSONNEL

MADISON—Smoking rates among military personnel are up, but an innovative Wisconsin program is helping them quit smoking or chewing tobacco.

More than 300 Wisconsin troops and veterans have enrolled in Operation Quit Tobacco, which provides free medication and coaching on how to quit to military personnel who call the Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669). Operation Quit Tobacco is available to all military personnel—including those on active duty as well as Wisconsin National Guard members, reservists and all Wisconsin veterans.

Military personnel who call the Quit Line receive two-week starter kits of nicotine patches or nicotine gum. The quit kits contain information on how to obtain additional medication through U.S. Veterans Administration (VA) hospitals, clinics and other military programs. Callers must use a Wisconsin area code to obtain a free quit kit. Participants also receive coaching from the Quit Line, which will help them develop an individualized quit plan. Quit Line coaches proactively call at times agreed upon by the participant and offer quit strategies, including setting a quit date and preparing for it. This approach can quadruple the success of a quit attempt.

The Need is Clear. Before the Iraq War, the military smoking rate increased from 29 percent in 1998 to 34 percent by 2002, according to a report in the *American Journal of*

(more)

Public Health. More than 30 percent of military smokers said they began smoking after entering the military. And 43 percent of ex-smokers returned to smoking after entering the Air Force, according to the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

History shows that's bad news for the health of veterans and their families. For example, smoking among servicemen addicted during World War II led to a 9-fold increase in lung cancer deaths by 1980. And there's evidence that smoking doesn't just kill veterans, it also may double the risk of experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, according to the journal *Archives of General Psychiatry*.

"It's encouraging to see that our troops are getting the help they need," said Sergeant Roman Yurek, U. S. Marine Corps substance abuse counselor. "This will lead to better health and less-costly healthcare for our military personnel. But there's still a lot of work to do, because one out of three troops still smokes or chews."

Showing Troops How to Quit. The best way to break free from tobacco addiction is to get a combination of coaching and medication, said Dr. Michael Fiore, director of the University of Wisconsin Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention (UW-CTRI), sponsor of Operation Quit Tobacco.

"We've seen the incidence of lung cancer shoot up after previous wars," Dr. Fiore said. "We hope we can prevent that from happening again by offering our military personnel the help they need to break free from tobacco addiction. Our troops and veterans have given us so much.

We are honored to have this opportunity to give them something back by offering a way to obtain a healthier, longer life."

**Wisconsin Tobacco
Quit Line**

1-800-QUIT-NOW

Hours:
7 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily

At other times,
leave a message.

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The Quit Line is managed by UW-CTRI, which is nationally recognized for its leadership in reducing the burden of illness and death from tobacco use. Part of the UW School of Medicine and Public Health, UW-CTRI research programs strive to improve tobacco dependence treatment and help people quit. All Wisconsin residents can call the Quit Line for free, confidential, non-judgmental assistance with quitting smoking or chewing.