

# Tobacco Talk

## Quitting is “catchy”

Quitting tobacco is contagious! A 32 year longitudinal study by Nicolas Christakis and James Fowler from Harvard Medical School and the University of California, San Diego has confirmed that people quit smoking in droves, or “network clusters”.

Christakis observed that if there is a change in the thinking & ideas of a social network, “like a cultural shift, a whole group who are connected but who might not know each other all quit together.” Even though the quitting smokers may perceive themselves as acting individually, the perspective from the larger social network shows that people quit smoking as groups rather than as individuals. “The culture of individualism is so strong that we sometimes forget how powerfully and silently social networks and those around us influence our health” said Richard Suzman, director of National Institute on Aging’s Division of Behavioral and Social Research.

The researchers studied effects of smoking cessation among married couples, siblings, friends, and coworkers and found “quitting cascades” that advanced from person-to-person. For instance, take persons A, B and C. The first person A, is friends with B, and B is friends with C, but A and C do not know each other. If C quits smoking, A’s chances of not smoking spike 30 percent, regardless of whether or not B smokes. The middle person appears to act as a kind of “carrier” for a social norm.

Close relationships are more influential. When a spouse quits smoking, the other spouse’s chances of *continuing to smoke* go down 67 percent; among friends, chances decrease by 36 percent; among co-workers in small firms, 34 percent; and among siblings, 25 percent.

The study also found that education matters. The higher the education a quitter has, the greater their influence on

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those around him/her to quit smoking. And conversely, the higher a person’s education the more likely they are to be influenced to quit. Christakis sums it up, “We see that the educated are not only more influential, but they are also more easily influenced.” See CATCHY, p. 4



## Women smokers lose 14.5 years off life span



Even though smoking takes an average of 14.5 years off women's lives, almost one in five American women age 18 and older smokes. Female smokers should take advantage of available resources, pick a quit day, and start taking steps toward kicking the habit, urges The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG).

"The damaging effects of smoking on women are extensive, well-documented, and can be observed from the cradle to the premature grave," Dr. Sharon Phelan said in an organization news release. "Smoking is a harmful habit that negatively affects nearly every organ in the body. There's just no good reason not to quit," she said.

Here's a list of the dangers:

Smoking is the main cause of lung cancer, the leading cause of cancer death in women. Since 1950, lung cancer deaths among women increased more than 600 percent. Smoking also significantly increases the risk of many other cancers in women, including breast, oral, pharynx, larynx, esophageal, pancreatic, kidney, bladder, uterine, and cervical.

Women who smoke are twice as likely to develop coronary heart disease and 10 times more likely to die from

chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) than nonsmokers. Smoking increases the risk of emphysema, bronchitis, osteoporosis, rheumatoid arthritis, cataracts, lower bone density after menopause, and hip fracture.

Smoking also contributes to early menopause, gum disease, tooth loss, and premature skin aging. Reproductive-age women who smoke may have trouble conceiving; pregnant women smokers are at high risk of delivering preterm or low birth weight infants or having babies with poor lung function, bronchitis or asthma. Women over age 35 who smoke and take birth control pills are at risk for developing deadly blood clots.

SOURCE: The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, news release, Nov. 3, 2008



# Spotlight on Youth



**Left:** SWAT member Armando Sedano, with Mary Lou Nelson, PHN, and Grinnell Norton, Deputy Director, at the Public Health Expo in Hamilton City on July 27, 2008. Armando was a great help at this event.

## SWAT members are advocates in action

"Students Working Against Tobacco" are taking the message about the dangers of tobacco use to the community and to younger students in Hamilton City, Orland and Willows. From manning tables at local community events to speaking to elementary and middle school students in the classrooms and on campuses, SWAT teams were advocating tobacco-free lives. During the week of the Great American Smokeout, SWAT students visited 13 classrooms at Fairview School in Orland and 7 classrooms at Hamilton Elementary Schools, reaching over 500 students! The younger students learned a lot about tobacco use, chemicals in tobacco, and smoking in the movies from the SWAT members and had fun in the process. All the SWAT members are amazing young people; we count it a privilege to be able to work with them.

**Right:** Orland High SWAT team members pose with their props for a picture before going into Fairview School classrooms to give presentations about the chemicals in tobacco.



**Above (back row):** Five SWAT members wait their turn to talk to Fairview School students. **Below:** Rosa Garcia asks a Fairview student, "Would you rather have Bug Spray or a Starburst?" Pesticides are some of the cancer-causing chemicals found in tobacco.



**Left:** Ismael "Izzy" Leal of Willows High, educates a Willows Intermediate student about the chemicals found in tobacco tar.



**Below:** Stephenie Jones, Jessica Adhin and Katrina Leonard of Willows High at Willows Intermediate School, have fun before talking to students during lunch period.





**Above:** Hamilton High SWAT members pose for a quick picture after giving fabulous presentations at Hamilton Elementary School. Pictured from L to R are: Eduardo Soto, Richard Jaeger, Gaby Flores, BJ Rosen, Stephanie Hernandez, Zaida Hernandez and Patty Gonzales.



**Above:** Hamilton High SWAT members educated students with a competitive quiz, "Test Your Tobacco I.Q.". The Hamilton Elementary students were very attentive and enthusiastically participated in the activity.

**Right:** Richard holds up the tar jar showing the amount of tar that goes through the body of a smoker who smokes one pack of cigarettes a day for a year! Gaby holds up a board displaying pictures of chemicals found in tobacco.



**Right:** Shoe display and posters inform CK Price students that 118 Californians die every day from a tobacco related disease.. **Below:** CK Price students observing the display as Mary Davis, SWAT advisor, talks to them.



**Above Right:** Orland High SWAT members getting ready to educate CK Price students during two lunch periods using the shoe display and tobacco tools.

**Right:** Hamilton, Orland and Willows SWAT students giving a Smoke-Free Movies presentation at the Mental Health, Alcohol & Drug Commission December meeting.



## Tobacco Free Glenn County Coalition

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## Smoke-free lodgings triple in U.S.

Amid growing public concern about the dangers of secondhand smoke, the number of lodgings prohibiting smoking indoors has tripled in three years, according to a USA TODAY analysis of American Automobile Association data. There are more than 8,300 smoke-free lodgings in the USA — nearly 6,000 more than in 2005, AAA's figures show. More than 7,000 of the smoke-free lodgings are hotels, motels, inns and B&Bs, while the rest are condos, cottages and other rentals. AAA has the most extensive list of smoke-free lodgings, but the total is undoubtedly higher. AAA inspectors do not evaluate every lodging, and a growing number of state and local governments have passed laws restricting

smoking in hotels and other public places. "Making a hotel smoke-free is the right thing to do because it protects guests and employees from secondhand smoke," says Joe McInerney, president of the American Hotel & Lodging Association. Two years ago, Westin Hotels & Resorts said it was responding to guests' demands for a healthy environment. It became the first chain to go smoke-free at its 90 U.S. hotels. Marriott, the nation's largest hotel company, made nearly all its more than 2,500 U.S. hotels smoke-free several months later. California has more smoke-free lodgings — 1,040 — than any state, according to AAA data. Florida follows with 444 and Texas with 408.



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It was also confirmed that smoking affected a smoker's social popularity. "If you look back at 1971, smokers and non-smokers alike were at the centers of social networks", says Fowler. "For people running companies and having parties, smoking was irrelevant. But during the '80s and '90s we saw a dramatic shift of smokers to the periphery of the social network. Contrary to what we might have thought in high school, smoking has become a supremely bad strategy for getting popular."

A powerful public health message can be extracted from this study regarding smoking as well as

other health behaviors such as eating well and exercising. Good behaviors are contagious! Why not start a positive health epidemic in your social network?

Information for this article taken from: Christakis, NA, Fowler, JH. (2008). The collective dynamics of smoking in a large social network. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 358(21): 2249-2258; and Harvard Medical School (2008, May 22). Smoking is Addictive, But Quitting is Contagious. *ScienceDaily*. Retrieved October 13, 2008, from

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/05/080521171823.htm>.

## Coalition Meetings and Events!:

Mark your calendars!



**Next quarterly meeting:**  
**Friday, March 27, 10:30-12:00**  
**Public Health Parkside Bld.**  
**1001 Railroad Ave, Orland**

# SWAT

**Orland: Friday, Jan. 16, Room 19**  
**Willows: Wednesday, Jan. 21, Room 403**  
**Hamilton: Monday, Jan. 26, Room 1**  
**YOUTH QUEST 2009—MARCH 23**