

The war on smoking widens

Dr T. H. Lo counsels a Chinese-speaking smoker.



NRT project with Chinese community

The Health Promotion Service is excited to be funding a pilot project that will enable 50 male Chinese-Australians to receive free NRT to support their quit smoking attempt.

NRT reduces cravings to smoke by replacing some of the nicotine from cigarettes but without the toxic chemicals found in tobacco smoke. In some studies, NRT patch users quit smoking at more than double the rate of those who used a placebo patch while overseas studies have shown that free NRT increases the number of smokers who attempt to quit.

Due to above-average smoking rates among Chinese-Australian adult males and the previous lack of culturally appropriate resources and quit-smoking services, the project specifically involves Chinese-speaking GPs and their Chinese-Australian male patients. In addition to receiving free NRT, patients will be able to contact a Chinese-speaking quit-smoking counsellor either via the telephone or face-to-face at Hurstville Community Health Centre. The five GPs involved in the pilot have been trained in tobacco cessation counselling.

The Health Promotion Service will evaluate the pilot project through a three-month follow-up survey with participants who consent to having their progress tracked. If successful, the project will be expanded to include all Chinese-speaking GPs affiliated with the St George Division of General Practice.

This initiative is the latest in a series of steps taken since 2001 by the Health Promotion Service as part of its partnership work with St George Division of General Practice to help reduce smoking rates among the Chinese-Australian population of Hurstville. Data from needs assessment interviews and telephone surveys has informed the process that has resulted in Chinese print and radio media coverage and resource development and training of health and community workers in smoking cessation techniques and in raising the issues of environmental tobacco smoke hazards with parents and carers.

Women inspired to quit

Quit Smoking programs for women across the Illawarra are reporting inspiring rates of success.

Women's Health nurse Michelle Webb says the programs aim

to help women stop smoking permanently by targeting the issues that they believe make it more difficult for them to quit than men.

The groups focus on the social realities of women's lives. Many take up smoking as teenagers because of peer pressure and self-image, and as their lives change the pressures change. During the program, the women share their experiences and support one another.

They are followed up 12 months later, and the long-term evaluations have demonstrated a successful quit rate (ie. no smoking for at least 12 months) of 30%.

The women's programs have evolved as knowledge about smoking addiction has expanded and aids to quitting such as nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) and Zyban have been refined.

The groups have been run in a variety of venues to enable women from diverse backgrounds to attend.

The most recent six-week Quit Smoking for Women Program was run at the Illawarra Women's Health Centre in Warilla. The nine women attending had a combined smoking history of 302 years, and only one could wait more than 30 minutes before having her first cigarette of the day. The program enabled six of these nine to successfully quit smoking.

If you have clients or patients with long-term, intractable smoking histories you may like to consider referring them. Enquiries to Annie McDonald, Smoking Cessation Services Coordinator on 4223 8334 or Michelle Webb, Women's Health Nurse Consultant on 4284 0355. ❖