

State-Sponsored Smoking Cessation Programs Can Save Lives, Dramatically Reduce Health Care Costs by More than \$300 Billion, New Study Says

Smoking cessation programs and federal, state and local laws banning smoking in public places have helped to curb tobacco smoking for some consumers, but each year more than 438,000 people die from smoking-related disorders and the overall costs of this lifestyle choice are significant. A new study conducted by researchers at Penn State University reports that helping smokers quit not only saves lives, but also results in favorable economic benefits to states.

The study, *Smoking Cessation: the Economic Benefits*, released September 14 by the American Lung Association, offers a nationwide cost-benefit analysis comparing the costs to society of smoking with the economic benefits of states providing “smoking cessation” coverage. The report comes at a time when cessation benefit provisions are about to be implemented at the federal and state levels as a result of health care reform legislation.

The Penn State researchers report that smoking results in costs to the U.S. economy that total more than \$301 billion, including workplace productivity losses of \$67.5 billion, costs of premature death that total \$117 billion, and direct medical expenditures that reach about \$116 billion. If we apply these costs to the average retail pack of cigarettes, which costs \$5.51, the true costs and workplace productivity losses nationwide equal \$18.05. That’s more than 300 percent greater than the actual cost per pack.

Helping people quit smoking can be an important way for states to reduce health costs, the study says. If states were to invest in comprehensive smoking cessation benefits, each would receive, on average, a 26 percent return on investment. For every dollar spent on helping smokers quit, states would see an average return of \$1.26, the study estimates. The Penn State researchers derived these economic benefits by considering lower medical costs due to fewer people smoking, increased productivity in the workplace and reduced absenteeism and premature death due to smoking.

"This study spells out in dollars and cents the great potential economic benefits to states of helping smokers quit. We urge the District of Columbia and all states to offer full coverage of clinically proven cessation treatments for smokers, which will not only save lives but also money," said Charles D. Connor, President and CEO of the American Lung Association.

What We Can Do: The Foundation for HealthSMART Consumers supports efforts to educate consumers across all demographics about tobacco cessation resources available to them. In particular, The Foundation will provide information to senior citizens. In August, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced that Medicare coverage for senior citizens trying to quit smoking has been expanded to include everyone on Medicare. Previously, Medicare offered coverage for tobacco-related counseling only for patients whose medical condition is exacerbated by smoking. If you are a Medicare beneficiary and want to quit the smoking habit, check with your Medicare office for additional details about programs to help you quit.

HealthSMART Tip: Take action now! For those who want help with quitting smoking, call the toll-free hotline at 1-800-Quit-Now. Visit the Smoking Cessation Leadership Center’s “Stop Smoking” web page at: <http://smokingcessationleadership.ucsf.edu/FSStopSmoking.htm>.

For more information:

See the complete American Lung Association study and data set at: <http://www.lungusa.org/stop-smoking/tobacco-control-advocacy/reports-resources/cessation-economic-benefits/states/united-states.html>

For additional resources:

Go to the Smoking Cessation Leadership Center's publications at:
<http://smokingcessationleadership.ucsf.edu/Publications.htm>

For a map of smoking facts by state, go to: <http://www.smokefree.gov/map.aspx>

References:

1. Facts on Smoking. Smoking Cessation Leadership Center. Accessed Sept. 22, 2010 at: <http://smokingcessationleadership.ucsf.edu/index.htm>
2. Rumberger, J.S., Hollenbeak, C.S. and Kline, D. Smoking Cessation: The Economic Benefits. Penn State University, April 30, 2010. Accessed at: <http://www.lungusa.org/stop-smoking/tobacco-control-advocacy/reports-resources/cessation-economic-benefits/reports/US.pdf>
3. New Study Finds Positive Return on Investment for States That Invest in Quit Smoking Treatments. PR Newswire, September 14, 2010. Accessed at: <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/new-study-finds-positive-return-on-investment-for-states-that-invest-in-quit-smoking-treatments-102886449.html>