

Wisconsin Hospital Association, Inc.



NEWS

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Wisconsin Hospitals Move Towards Tobacco-Free Campuses Statewide
WHA Recommends 100% of Hospitals Become Tobacco-Free by November 2007

MADISON (October 24, 2006) ----- Lighting up in or near a hospital may be a thing of the past by this time next year. The Wisconsin Hospital Association Board of Directors is asking its 132 member hospitals to implement tobacco-free campus policies by November 2007. Roughly half of Wisconsin's 132 hospitals now have a campus-wide tobacco-free policy; another 50 are tobacco free in the hospital building.

The goal is for 100 percent of the hospitals in Wisconsin to be tobacco free within one year. Hospitals are already routinely offering tobacco cessation counseling to their patients and employees. Many also offer tobacco-cessation classes in the community.

It's all part of their mission, according to Mary Starmann-Harrison, president of SSM-Wisconsin in Madison and WHA Board Chair. "Hospitals treat illness, but we are just as dedicated to prevention and improving the overall health of the communities we serve," she said.

"We treat patients every day who are suffering from an illness that was either caused by or made worse by the use of tobacco," said Starmann-Harrison. "The dangers of both tobacco use and second hand smoke are well-documented. Hospitals must lead by example. By not permitting the use of tobacco on our campuses, we demonstrate our firm commitment to the health and safety of our employees and patients."

According to the Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention at the UW School of Medicine and Public Health, 7,000 Wisconsin residents die every year from disease directly caused by cigarette smoking, more than the death toll from AIDS, illegal drugs, alcohol, suicide and homicide combined. Smoking costs the Wisconsin economy \$3 billion, including \$1.6 billion in direct health care costs and \$1.4 billion in lost worker productivity. Health insurance premiums are higher for all Wisconsinites because of these expenses. There are 800,000 smokers in Wisconsin, representing 22 percent of all state residents. More than 70 percent of Wisconsin smokers want to quit and 50 percent try each year.

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