

INNOVATIONS IN SECONDHAND TOBACCO SMOKE RESEARCH

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This paper provides an overview of the most recent evidence on effective strategies for reducing exposure to secondhand smoke (SHS). Tobacco use remains the single leading cause of preventable illnesses and death in the United States. Exposure to SHS affects smokers' loved ones, coworkers, and many disparate populations, resulting in 62,000 deaths per year from coronary heart disease and 3,000 lung cancer deaths in nonsmokers. Every year, smoking costs the U.S. over \$75 billion in direct health care costs and over \$80 billion in lost productivity costs.

Almost 18 years after the initial report on the harmful effects of secondhand smoke, the Environmental Protection Agency classified tobacco smoke as a Group A carcinogen. Even short-term exposure to secondhand smoke (30 minutes) in relatively low doses places healthy nonsmokers at risk for developing heart disease by interrupting normal coronary circulation. Only 43% of the nation's hospitality workers are protected from SHS on the job compared to over three-fourths of white collar workers.

Over the past three decades, many governments have enacted legislation restricting smoking in many public places and private worksites. Although nearly 1,600 local communities and 6 states have adopted strict workplace smoking restrictions, the southern states lag behind in protecting workers from the dangers of SHS. On July 1, 2003, Lexington, Kentucky, in the heart of tobacco country, passed a smoke-free ordinance banning smoking in all public places.

Restrictions on smoking in public places and private workplaces reduce smoking prevalence and average daily cigarette consumption and promote quitting among smokers. Smoke-free policies also protect nonsmokers and prevent youth from initiating tobacco use. It is estimated that 178,000 smokers would stop smoking and those who continued to smoke would consume 10 billion fewer cigarettes per year if all workplaces in the United States implemented smoke-free policies.

This symposium illustrates the need for comprehensive and varied approaches to understanding exposure to SHS. Strategies that focus solely on individual will not be effective; rather, a combination of approaches targeting individuals, populations, and policies will be most effective in protecting smokers and nonsmokers from exposure to SHS.