

Comprehensive smoking bans in public places save lives

Geneva, 24 February 2009 - A year ago, the overwhelming majority of Geneva's voters voted for a comprehensive ban on smoking in public places. The World Heart Federation, the Swiss Foundation of Cardiology, the Swiss Society of Cardiology and the community of health professionals committed to heart health celebrated this victory for Swiss health policy. Now they confirm their support of those working to defend the comprehensive ban and honor the voter's choice.

Second hand smoke kills

The scientific evidence about the dangers of second-hand smoke is clear: passive smoking increases risks of fatal conditions including heart disease, cancers and sudden infant death syndrome. ¹ Exposure to second hand smoke at work is estimated to kill some 200,000 people around the world every year. ² In Switzerland, mortality caused by passive smoking is estimated at 1,000 people a year. ³

Passive smoking increases risk of heart disease

"Heart attacks are the most common cause of death related to second-hand smoke," explains Dr. René Lerch, Professor of Cardiology at the University Hospitals in Geneva and board member of the Swiss Foundation of Cardiology. "Passive smoking increases the risk of heart disease by up to 30%. Even brief exposure to second hand smoke can affect the heart." An analysis of the scientific evidence concludes that passive smoking hurts the heart almost as much as active smoking. ⁴

Comprehensive smoking bans protect hearts, save lives

Where comprehensive smoking bans are in place, heart attack rates have quickly dropped by an average of 19%. ⁵ Dr. Pekka Puska, President of the World Heart

¹ World Health Organization, 2007 Protection from Exposure to Second-hand Tobacco Smoke. Policy Recommendations; Report of the U.S. Surgeon General 2006, *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke*; California Environmental Protection Agency, 2005, Proposed Identification of Environmental Tobacco Smoke as a Toxic Air Contaminant, Part B: Health Effects

² Takala J (2005). Introductory report: decent work, safe work. International Labor Organization: Geneva. Available online at <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/safework/wdcongrs17/intrep.pdf>.

³ OxyRomandie 2005. Mortalité due au tabagisme passif en Suisse. <http://www.oxygeneve.ch/docs/mortalite-estimations.pdf>

⁴ Barnoya, J. and Glantz, S (2005) *Circulation*. "Cardiovascular Effects of Secondhand Smoke: Nearly as large as smoking. <http://circ.ahajournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/111/20/2684>

⁵ Glantz, S. Meta-analysis of the effect of smoke-free laws on acute myocardial infarction: an update. *Preventive Medicine* 2008, 47: 452-453

⁶ Benz-Duborgel V, Mascarini J, Borrero P, Kupferschmid S, Humair J.P. Depuis le 1er janvier 2006 "Nous ne fumons pas aux HUG": Evaluation auprès du personnel après 14 mois. Genève, HUG, 2008.

Federation, remarks: "Smoke-free policy is a compelling priority for those of us committed to improving heart health. In Europe and globally, heart disease and stroke kill more people than any other cause; smoke-free policy is a simple, clear and cost-effective way to reduce this heavy toll."

Comprehensive smoking bans save lives by protecting both smokers and non-smokers from the risks of second-hand smoke, and by making it easier for smokers to quit. At the University Hospitals in Geneva, the average levels of harmful particles in the air have dropped by 77% since the hospital went smoke-free, and the percentage of smokers among staff there has gone down by almost one third.⁶

Smoking areas weaken protection

According to the World Health Organization, there is no safe level of secondhand smoke, and closed smoking areas weaken the protection provided by smoke-free policy. There is no effective way to reduce the level of harmful particles to a safe level in the air in or around the smoking areas. Even the best ventilation systems do not remove toxins and smoke inevitably escapes through doors or windows to other areas. Even when smoking areas are supposed to be without service, employees may be pressured to enter them to clean or provide other services.⁷

See Global Smokefree Partnership, 2007 *Smokefree air, the essential facts*
http://tobaccofreecenter.org/files/pdfs/SF_facts.pdf

⁷ World Health Organization 2007. *Protection from Exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke. Policy recommendations* and Global Smokefree Partnership, 2007 *Smokefree air, the essential facts*
http://tobaccofreecenter.org/files/pdfs/SF_facts.pdf