



THE ONTARIO  
TOBACCO  
RESEARCH  
UNIT

UNITÉ  
DE RECHERCHE  
SUR LE TABAC  
DE L'ONTARIO

# EVALUATION NEWS

ISSUE 1  
OCTOBER 2008

## SMOKING AND QUITTING BEHAVIOURS OF YOUNG MEN



### OUR STUDY

Welcome to the first newsletter in our series looking at smoking and quitting behaviours of young Ontario male smokers

The purpose of our current evaluation study is to assess the extent to which Ontario's smoking cessation system meets the needs of young male smokers who are 19-29 years old.

In order to accomplish this, we are:

- examining how many 19-29 year old males have used the smoking cessation services funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion.
- analyzing the Ontario Tobacco Survey (OTS). The survey covers a range of topics about tobacco and includes questions about the awareness and use of the current cessation services.
- interviewing 100 male smokers 19-29 years old to contextualize our survey

data. The interviews are being conducted in Sault Ste. Marie, Hamilton and Toronto.

- conducting interviews with key informants who present insights into the smoking cessation needs of young male smokers. These interviews will allow us to examine the current smoking cessation services available for young male smokers.

This newsletter presents information on how many 19-29 year old male smokers have used Ontario's cessation services. We will be reporting on our other findings in future newsletters, so stay tuned!

### WHY STUDY YOUNG MEN?

About 44 Ontarians die every day from tobacco-related diseases.<sup>1</sup> Approximately one-third of all cancers in Ontario (excluding non-melanoma skin cancer) are caused by tobacco.<sup>1</sup> Tobacco use has a large negative impact on the health and economy of the province. The annual economic cost of smoking - including direct costs such as health care and indirect costs from lost productivity due to illness and early death - has been estimated at over \$6 billion or more than \$500 per person in Ontario.<sup>2</sup>

### IN THIS ISSUE:

**PAGE ONE:** Our Study; Why Study Young Men?

**PAGE TWO:** Why Study Young Men? (continued)

**PAGE THREE:** Smoking Cessation Services Available Throughout Ontario

**PAGE FOUR:** Reach Of Services Available In 2007/2008



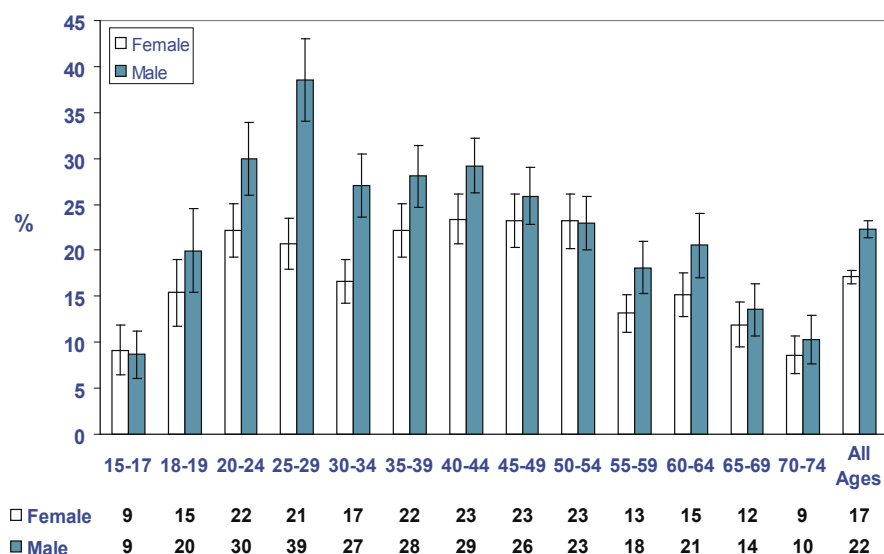


## WHY STUDY YOUNG MEN?

Continued from page 1

Data from the latest Canadian Community Health Survey<sup>3</sup> showed that young Ontario men aged 25-29 had the highest prevalence of current smoking at 39%; almost double that of their female counterparts (21%) and of Ontario's general smoking population (20%) (See Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Current Smoking, by Sex and Age Grouping (Ages 15-74), Ontario, 2005**



Source: Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS Cycle 3.1) 2005.

It is extremely important to help young smokers to stop smoking as soon as possible. Many of the health risks associated with smoking decrease upon quitting.

Within one year of quitting smoking, the risk of a heart attack decreases by 50%; within five years, the risk returns to the level of a person who has never smoked.<sup>4</sup>

For cancer, it takes approximately 10-15 years after quitting to approach the risk levels of a "never smoker".<sup>4</sup> Quitting before age 35 can result in a life expectancy comparable to that of someone who has never smoked.<sup>5,6</sup>

*"The greatest benefits of quitting can be seen among those who have smoked for relatively few years, smoked only a few cigarettes per day, or who have an absence of disease at the time of quitting".<sup>6</sup>*

The tobacco industry has been successfully targeting young adults,<sup>7,8</sup> but unfortunately, there is very little research and no best practices on what smoking cessation interventions or strategies work best for young people.

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# EVALUATION NEWS



## SMOKING CESSATION SERVICES AVAILABLE THROUGHOUT ONTARIO

In Ontario, over two million people (12 years and older) smoke, and approximately 16% of those smokers (or 316,000 people) are young men between 18-29 years old (CCHS, 2005, cycle 3.1). To promote cessation, the Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion has implemented a number of products, programs, and services to encourage people to quit smoking and to help them in their quit attempts. These include:

### 1. Leave the Pack Behind (LTPB)

Leave The Pack Behind (LTPB) is a comprehensive, age-tailored, tobacco control initiative for young adults on post-secondary campuses. This program:

- assists post secondary school student smokers to quit smoking,
- protects non-smokers from second-hand smoke,
- prevents students from starting to smoke, and
- exposes tobacco industry tactics.

LTPB uses a peer-to-peer approach; a small team of students from each campus runs the initiative under the supervision of a college/university staff member. To date, 86% of Ontario post-secondary institutions are serviced by LTPB.

### 2. Smokers' Helpline

The Canadian Cancer Society's Smokers' Helpline is a free, confidential, interactive telephone service for all smokers. The Helpline supports smokers who:

- want to quit,
- are thinking about quitting,
- have quit but want support,
- continue smoking and do not want to quit.

Trained quit specialists provide clients with information, advice and support as well as with printed materials and referrals to local programs and services. They also assist family and friends who would like to help a smoker quit.



### 3. Smokers' Helpline Online

Smokers' Helpline also provides web-based, interactive assistance 24-hours per day, 7 days per week via Smokers' Helpline Online. Features of the web-based help include:

- online support groups,
- email support,
- instant messenger service, and
- personalized feedback about financial and health gains associated with quitting.

### 4. The Driven To Quit Challenge

The purpose of the Driven To Quit Challenge is to motivate adult smokers to quit smoking, to disseminate information about cessation resources and to encourage smokers to seek help through the population-based Smoker's Helpline/Online.

### 5. The Ottawa Heart Institute

The Ottawa Heart Institute has developed a network of hospital-based smoking cessation programs. At admission, smoking status is identified through the medical and/or nursing history and documented in the patient record. Current smokers are advised to quit in a personalized manner by the attending physician/nurse.

### 6. The Stop Study

The Stop Study is a comprehensive program that distributes free nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) products to smokers across Ontario who want to quit. The overall goal of the study is to evaluate the methods and effectiveness of providing (NRT) to Ontario smokers.

It should be noted that some Public Health Agencies also use funding from their Mandatory Health Programs (a set of guidelines and funding provided by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care for Public Health Agencies in order to increase health promotion, disease prevention and health protection) to provide smoking cessation services to their residents.

The Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion has also introduced a series of policies to protect people from secondhand smoke. These policies, which are designed to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke, might in turn encourage smokers to quit smoking. In addition, both the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the federal government have program and policy initiatives to help smokers quit smoking.

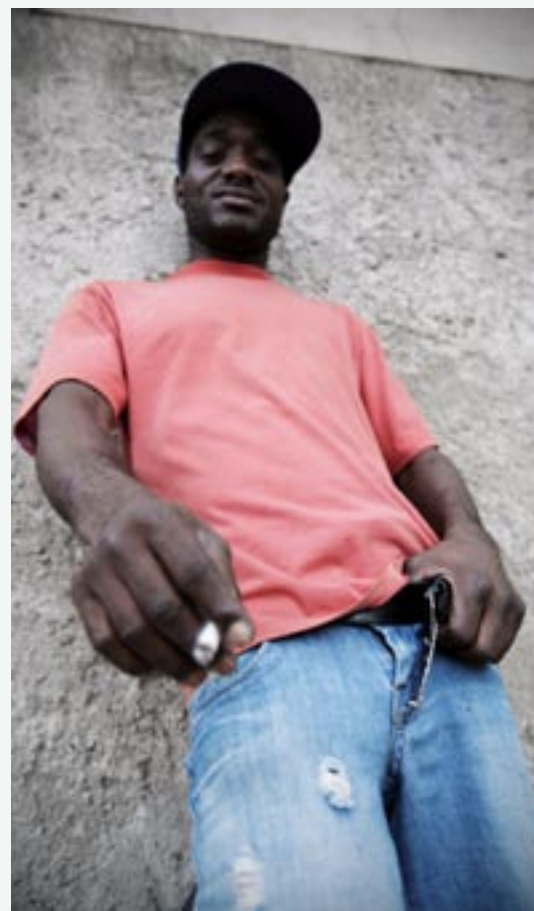


## REACH OF SERVICES AVAILABLE IN 2007/2008

As a first step in understanding how well cessation services are serving young men who smoke, we examined the use of programs in 2007/2008 by **male smokers between 19-29 years of age**:

- **Smokers' Helpline** received 275 calls from young men, which represents 5% of all its calls; 96% (257) of these callers are calling for themselves and 70% are daily smokers.
- **Smokers' Helpline Online** had 807 young male smokers register, which represents over 10% of all the registrants (7703).
- **The Driven to Quit Challenge** was taken up by 2,765 male smokers 19-29 years old, which represents just over 10% of all registrants (26,632).
- **Leave the Pack Behind** distributed self help booklets to approximately 3,250 male smokers in this age group. This represents 40% of all the booklets that were distributed (8122).
- **The STOP Study** gave free NRT to 1804 male smokers 19-29 years old, which represents 6% of all STOP participants (29,509).
- **The Ottawa Heart Institute Model** delivered interventions to 165 young men between the ages of 19-29. This represents approximately 3% of people involved in the program.

These results show that most cessation programs and studies are serving older adults. Leave the Pack Behind is the exception given that it only serves young adults. Less than 10,000 of the 316,000 Ontarian male smokers 19-29 years old received help from one of the services funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion. Thus, all these services together are helping less than 3% of all male smokers 19-29 years old quit smoking.



## RESEARCH TEAM

- Robert Schwartz: Director of Evaluation and Monitoring
- John Garcia: Director of Knowledge Exchange and Systems Evaluation
- Nadia Minian: Scientist
- Anne Philipneri, Research Officer
- Emily Di Sante: Research Assistant
- Michelle Poirier: Outreach Worker
- Anxhela Paparizo: Outreach Worker
- Mathew Aaron: Outreach Worker

Newsletter production: Marilyn Pope and Sonja Johnston

Ethical approval for this project was obtained from the University of Toronto. This project was supported by The Ontario Tobacco Research Unit (OTRU) with a grant from the Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Dr. Nadia Minian  
Ontario Tobacco Research Unit  
c/o Dalla Lana School of Public Health  
University of Toronto  
155 College Street, Unit 530  
Toronto, ON M5T 3M7  
Telephone: 416.978.8137

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