



News Release

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Record number of Wisconsin Senior Smokers Quit through Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line Program

(MADISON) Wisconsin senior smokers, aged 65 or over, quit in record numbers as part of a Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line program that provided free nicotine patches and phone counseling last year. More than 43% of the senior participants successfully quit, based on a survey conducted nine months after enrollment. In contrast, research shows that quitting "cold turkey," or without any help, is successful for only about 5% of people.

The 43% abstinence rate among the seniors, among the highest ever reported, contradicts the belief that older smokers are less interested or able to quit. During the program, 1,800 Wisconsin seniors called the Quit Line and 1,300 enrolled for telephone counseling and free nicotine patches. More than 90% of the callers set a quit date. Among those who were unable to quit successfully, more than 80% still wanted to stop and 44% were planning to quit within 30 days.

Dr. Michael Fiore, director of the UW Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention, which manages the Quit Line, was delighted that the program helped so many seniors quit tobacco use. "This evaluation clearly demonstrates that, contrary to popular notions, senior smokers are eager and ready to quit when given access to

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effective cessation services, such as the Quit Line and medication. It's never too late to quit smoking and reap the benefits of better health.”

The program, which ran from May through August 2002, was sponsored by the UW-Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention, the Wisconsin Women's Health Foundation and the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services. Although free nicotine patches are no longer available through this program, they are available as a drug benefit through Wisconsin Senior Care. Quit Line counseling remains available to everyone in Wisconsin at 1-877-270-STOP.

The Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line provides free, individualized coaching for smokers who want to quit. All callers receive a quit kit and most elect to receive calls from the Quit Line during their quit attempt. Quit Line hours are: Monday-Thursday 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.; Friday 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.; and Saturday and Sunday 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.

The Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line was launched in May 2001. More than 25,500 people have called the Quit Line for help in quitting tobacco. More than 5,600 individuals have successfully quit smoking with help from the Quit Line. That translates to Wisconsin saving more than \$16 million dollars in excess health care costs resulting from diseases caused by smoking over the past two years. The full evaluation of the Wisconsin Senior Patch Program will be available December 1, 2004.

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