

# Smoke Free Homes project aims to clear the air for kids

**the AAP Department of Community, Chapter and State Affairs**

Smoking is now recognized as a pediatric disease. Prenatal tobacco exposure and secondhand smoke exposure among children and adolescents set the stage for disease and death in adulthood and cause considerable morbidity, mortality and expenditure of health care dollars.



Although the pediatric research community is studying and developing services in tobacco control and prevention, this work has taken place in relative isolation.

The Smoke Free Homes project is working to change this, with the goal of making the nation's 60,000 pediatricians the next soldiers in the war against tobacco.

Cigarette smoking and secondhand smoke exposure are widely recognized as leading causes of asthma, ear infections, pneumonia, permanent lung changes and sudden infant death syndrome as well as cognitive and learning disabilities.

The Smoke Free Homes initiative is a national effort to train pediatric clinicians in brief, effective methods to reduce children's exposure to secondhand smoke through parental smoking cessation and harm reduction. Founding partners of the project include Children's National Medical Center (CNMC), the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology (AAAAI), the Center for Child Health Research (CCHR) and the Academy.

Seventy-seven representatives from AAP chapters recently took part in a Smoke Free Homes symposium that provided education in the harms of secondhand smoke and effective ways to reduce exposure, including counseling parents on smoking cessation. Additionally, participants discussed projects that have been implemented in pediatric clinical settings to reduce secondhand smoke exposure in order to learn from their successes, failures and barriers to success.

The attendees are forming the foundation of "Smoke Free Homes Champions," and have been charged with disseminating the techniques and training learned at the symposium in their communities and providing leadership to their colleagues.

"The energy at the Smoke Free Homes symposium was tremendous," said Dana Best, M.D., M.P.H., FAAP, principal investigator and project director for the Smoke Free Homes initiative. "Pediatricians understand the harms of secondhand smoke exposure to children and the important role they play in reducing the exposure. We are very excited about the changes pediatricians can make in their practices and communities to improve children's health."

Carol Touloukian, M.D., FAAP, a symposium attendee, added, "I'm excited to go back to Indiana to educate our pediatricians on how to get parents to quit smoking and reduce their children's exposure to secondhand smoke."

Other pediatric experts serving on the Smoke Free Homes planning team include Sophie Balk, M.D., FAAP; Jonathan Klein, M.D., M.P.H., FAAP; Michael Weitzman, M.D., FAAP; and Sue Tanski, M.D., FAAP.

In addition to the symposium, the Smoke Free Homes project includes the establishment of an infrastructure to support project efforts. The infrastructure will include a continuing education program; a communications network using Web-based resources such as listservs; a project Web site; an "Ask the Experts" page;

a Web-based clinician bulletin board and electronic newsletters; patient and family education materials; a pediatric secondhand smoke exposure reduction clinical practice guideline; and speaker's materials such as Grand Rounds talks.

As leading sources of continuing education and expertise in children's health, CNMC, AAAAI, CCHR and the Academy are uniquely positioned to develop, implement and evaluate this project. Their endorsement will help create a group of leaders equipped with the tools to develop and support smoke-free environments for children, especially those under age 6 years and parents of newborns.

Achievement of project goals will improve the quality of primary health care provided to U.S. children, increase access to smoking cessation services for parents and other caregivers, and reach priority populations, including low-income families, minority groups, women and children.

The Smoke Free Homes planning team hopes these efforts will help create opportunities for pediatric clinicians to save children's lives and reduce the morbidity due to secondhand smoke exposure.

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