

The Nicotine Challenger

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This issue: Workforce Development

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A View From The Director

In our Winter issue of the *Challenger*, I laid out some ambitious goals for tobacco control for 2005. While we have not achieved these yet, some are getting closer (e.g. comprehensive smoke-free workplace legislation for New Jersey) and there is a lot of other good news to report on.

Medicare to Cover Smoking Cessation Counseling

As of March 22nd, 2005, Medicare will reimburse qualified healthcare practitioners for smoking cessation counseling for patients who have an illness recognized by the US Surgeon General as being caused or worsened by tobacco use, or are taking a medication affected by tobacco use. Prescription medications will also be covered by Medicare from January 2006. While one could argue that broader coverage would have been better, this is an important step towards wider availability of treatment for tobacco dependence and this precedent should stimulate other health insurers to cover tobacco treatment as a standard benefit.

Dramatic Reductions in New Jersey Youth Tobacco Use

The report on the 2004 New Jersey Youth Tobacco Survey has just been released and shows that there has been a significant reduction in tobacco use in virtually every group from 7th to 12th grade in New Jersey from 1999 to 2004. These reductions in youth tobacco use since the NJ Comprehensive Tobacco Control Program started (in 2000) are impressively large, even when compared to the national trend. For example, the per capita consumption of cigarettes by New Jersey youth has fallen by over 50% in just five years – a larger reduction than most other states. A large part of the credit for this improvement should go to New Jersey's Comprehensive Tobacco Control Program. New Jersey legislators should also be congratulated for raising the excise tax on cigarettes to the second highest level in the country (\$2.40 per pack). The combination of these two potent factors has prevented many young people from becoming addicted to tobacco. However, there is still plenty of room for further tax increases. In fact, the tax rate on non-cigarette tobacco (e.g. cigars and chewing tobacco) was actually cut from 48% to 30% a few years ago and this probably explains why little cigars (which look just like cigarettes but cost half as much) are now used by almost as many young people in New Jersey as cigarettes. Its time this anomaly was rectified.

High Demand for Tobacco Treatment and Specialist Training

Here at the Tobacco Dependence Program we are pleased by the continuing high demand for treatment at our Tobacco Dependence Clinic, where we recently saw our 2000th patient. We have also noticed an increased demand for our intensive 5-day training for Tobacco Dependence Treatment Specialists. Our June training was so popular we had to move it to a larger venue, which also reached capacity with over 50 trainees, over 20 of whom traveled from outside New Jersey. In addition to continuing to offer this 5-day training over the coming year, we plan to offer two-day trainings focusing on training school professionals to run our school-based youth cessation program "Youth Quit2Win". For further information on these trainings please visit our website at www.tobaccoprogram.org.

Finally, our next annual conference (September 29th at the Hyatt, New Brunswick) will focus on "Tobacco Comorbidity and Stigma." The aim of this conference is to identify groups whose tobacco dependence has not been properly addressed because of the stigma associated with their illness, be that a smoking-caused illness (e.g. lung cancer), an illness that frequently co-occurs with tobacco use (e.g. another addiction or mental health problem), or simply the stigma associated with being a tobacco user (e.g. smoking while pregnant). I hope to see you there.

Jonathan Foulds, Director, Tobacco Dependence Program

CHAMPION VS. TOBACCO

DENISE JOLICOEUR

**President of the Association for
the Treatment of Tobacco Use and
Dependence (ATTUD)**

by Jonathan Foulds PhD

Denise Jolicoeur MPH CHES, is the first elected President of ATTUD, a new international organization of providers dedicated to the



promotion of and increased access to evidence-based tobacco treatment. Denise, who is based at University of Massachusetts Medical School, became involved in tobacco treatment and training after having watched her grandfather suffer from and eventually succumb to emphysema as a result of a lifetime of smoking.

Denise said "My dedication to ATTUD has come in part from my years of frustration in trying to find resources to learn about tobacco treatment. When I began my involvement, there were relatively few sources of training and information." Denise can be contacted at: denise.jolicoeur@umassmed.edu or via the ATTUD website at www.attud.org

Denise has been vital in the creation of ATTUD which has now grown to over 100 members since the Inaugural meeting in December 2003. While her reign as President of ATTUD is coming to an end in December 2005, we thank her for all of her hard work and dedication towards workforce development of health professionals who want to make a difference in the lives of their clients who are dependent upon tobacco.