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Search | Français | Home

ABOUT US | YOUR VISIT | WHAT'S NEW | EMPLOYMENT | HEALTH PROFESSIONALS
FOUNDATION | VOLUNTEERS | CONTACT US | SITE MAP | RESEARCH

MENU

What's New - Home

Events

News Release Archive

Home: What's New: News Releases: 2001

What's New



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - November 28, 2001

Smoking-Related Illness Costs Area Hospitals Nearly \$50 Million: Key Physicians At Ottawa Hospital

OTTAWA - Physicians at The Ottawa Hospital said today that smoking-related illness costs area hospitals nearly \$50 million a year, based on a study published in 1998. Doctors expect that figure could drop by millions as a result of the city's new no-smoking by-law, freeing up dollars to deal with rising health costs.

The doctors made the announcement in connection with the City of Ottawa's recent decision to ban smoking in restaurants and bars. The physicians demonstrated their support for the idea of 100% smoke-free workplaces and public places.

"The ban will improve the health of people in Ottawa by reducing tobacco consumption and second-hand smoke, and it could save us millions of dollars," said Dr. Chris Carruthers, Chief of Staff. "Fifty million dollars is 9% of our budget so this is the single most important thing the City could have done to help us save money," he added.

The physicians also saluted the City of Cornwall, where City Council voted on Monday to make their city smoke-free by spring. "They're our patients too," said Dr. Atul Kapur. Cornwall is part of the catchment area of The Ottawa Hospital, which means residents of Cornwall come to Ottawa for specialized medical services.

The analysis was based on a study, published in 1998 in the peer-reviewed journal *Addiction*, by researchers at the University of Toronto, which calculated the direct costs to hospitals of smoking-related illness and death in Canada. The study calculated the average cost per Canadian to be about \$61, which comes to \$48.6 million for Ottawa.

Other North American jurisdictions, such as California or Massachusetts, have comprehensive tobacco control programs—including smoke-free public places—similar to those in Ottawa. They have seen smoking rates and cigarette consumption drop by as much as 30%.

"Common sense says that if you reduce smoking by 30%, you're going to save a lot of that \$50 million," said Dr. Hartley Stern, Executive Director of the Ontario Regional Cancer Centre. "With the whole 50 million, The Ottawa Hospital could buy 17 MRI machines or do 6,000 hip replacements—every year," he added.

Background on Costs of Tobacco

- **Smoking costs Ottawa Hospitals almost 50 million dollars per year.** This figure is based on a study published in 1998 in the peer-reviewed journal *Addiction* by researchers at the University of Toronto. The study calculated the direct costs to hospitals of smoking-related illnesses. The average cost per

Canadian was calculated to be about \$61 per year, which amounts to \$48.6 million for Ottawa.

- **Smoke-free public places and other elements of a comprehensive tobacco control program may save millions of dollars.** Other North American jurisdictions with similar tobacco control programs to Ottawa have seen smoking rates and cigarette consumption drop by as much as 30%.
 - For example, in Massachusetts, cigarette purchases decreased 30 per cent over six years. (Independent Evaluation of the Massachusetts Tobacco Control Program, Fifth Annual Report)
 - In California, the smoking rate among 14 to 15-year-olds was cut roughly in half over a three-year period. (California Department of Health Services, 2000)
- **Smoking-related costs represent 9% of The Ottawa Hospital budget.** The Ottawa Hospital budget for 2001 is \$531 million and \$50 million is 9% of this.
- **\$50 million would buy 17 MRI machines, 6,000 hip replacements or pay the Ottawa Hospital deficit 2.5 times.** The cost of an MRI machine is \$2.8 million, a hip replacement \$8,154 and the projected Ottawa Hospital deficit is \$18.5 million.

Reference:

The Economic Costs of Alcohol, Tobacco and Illicit Drugs in Canada, 1992, Addiction 1998;93(7), 991-1006.

-30-

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[Back to 2001 News Release Archive](#)

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