

Ontarians to Receive Free Medication to Help Them Quit Smoking

For Immediate Release - August, 2008 (Toronto) – Ontarians who want to quit smoking have one more way to do it today thanks to a study that will distribute free nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) and counseling support. The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) in partnership with the Ministry of Health Promotion is collaborating with KFL&A Public Health to roll out the STOP (Smoking Treatment for Ontario Patients) Study, the first of its kind in Canada. The study evaluates the success of various types of smoking cessation support for Ontarians ranging from brief to intensive and everything in between.

While smoking rates in Ontario have declined over the past twenty years, 17% of Ontarians continue to smoke. This means that 1.7 million people may potentially develop serious illness as a direct result of their dependence on tobacco. Smoking is the largest preventable cause of disease in Ontario and represents a significant burden on Ontario's health care system, totaling \$1.6 billion every year. The good news is that it is not too late to quit.

"If people are able to quit sooner, they may be able to prevent the onset of serious illnesses brought on by smoking," said Dr. Peter Selby, Clinical Director of Addiction Programs, CAMH and Principal Investigator of the STOP Study. "This study will allow us to help people along in the process and monitor which quitting methods are most effective. This way, we will be able to better treat people in the future," he said.

While it has been shown that attempts to quit smoking are more successful when done with the help of counselling and a nicotine replacement medication, many people do not use this resource, partially due to cost. The study will distribute nicotine replacement therapy aids free of charge along with brief cessation-related information to Ontario residents whose progress will be monitored periodically to track their effectiveness.

"Smokers who are ready to quit smoking frequently need support, and we are ensuring that they have access to effective support to help them along the way," says Minister of Health Promotion Margaret Best. "That is why the McGuinty government has made unprecedented investments to improve access to smoking cessation resources for Ontarians who are ready to quit."

"There are more choices than ever for smokers who want to quit and we are prepared to help them," said Dave McWilliam of KFL&A Public Health. "We are happy to be partnering with CAMH and the Ministry of Health Promotion in giving residents of KFL&A area a chance to quit smoking"

Those interested in participating in the STOP Study on Dec 8th may do so by calling #613-542-2949 ext 231 at North Kingston Community Health Centre. Those interested in participating on Dec 9th may do so by calling #613-549-1232 ext 333. Two sessions will be held on Dec 9th, one in Napanee and the second at KFL&A Public Health, Kingston.

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) is Canada's leading addiction and mental health teaching hospital. Integrating clinical care, scientific research, education, policy development and health promotion, CAMH transforms the lives of people impacted by mental health and addiction issues.

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