

Dentists' unrecognised lifesaving role

The Australian Dental Association NSW has joined forces with the Cancer Institute NSW to highlight the vital role that dentists play in providing smoking cessation support.

With World No Tobacco Day on May 31st, experts are calling on dental health professionals across NSW to refer their patients who smoke to the NSW Quitline.

Tobacco use remains the single largest cause of preventable disease and death in NSW. Dr Neil Peppitt, President, Australian Dental Association NSW, said dental health professionals have the opportunity to make a bigger difference to the health of their patients at risk.

"While dental health professionals play an active role in early detection of serious disease caused by tobacco use, the opportunity they have to play a more preventative role may not always be top of mind," he said.

"Dentists know that smoking puts people at high risk of cancers of the mouth, throat, oesophagus, pharynx, larynx, or tongue. We see the effects of smoking on people's general oral health and so we have the opportunity to start a conversation about the impact of smoking. Most importantly, we can provide referrals to help them start their quitting journey."

Telephone counselling services, such as the NSW Quitline, can double the chances of quitting compared to self-help materials, brief advice or pharmacotherapy alone.

Chief Cancer Officer and CEO of the Cancer Institute NSW Professor David Currow said while smoking rates continue their downward trend over the last 20 years, 47,000 people are hospitalised and nearly 5,000 deaths are attributed to smoking in NSW each year.

"We need to take a more multi-disciplinary approach to continue to reduce the impact of tobacco use in NSW. Prevention is the best option, and dentists in particular are in an important position to make a real difference," said Professor Currow.

"If each of the 6,793 dentists across the state took a few minutes to refer their patients who smoke, we would have thousands on their way to a healthier future and a healthier NSW – one small step can really make a big difference," Dr Peppitt added.

To find out more about the NSW Quitline and how to refer online or via fax, visit:
<http://www.cancerinstitute.org.au/quitline-referral> or call the NSW Quitline 13 QUIT (13 78 48)

Media contact: Laura Kiely, Media and Public Relations, Cancer Institute NSW
First Last **m** +61 (0)415 158 229 **Email** Laura.Kiely@cancerinstitute.org.au