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Public Health Library

A Report On
The Staff
Survey on Smoking
Carried out in
November 2002

By
Tobacco Control Service
Health Promotion Department
South Western Area Health Board



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Survey on Smoking Among Staff in the South Western Area Health Board

Introduction

As part of its recent development the Tobacco Control Service, of the Health Promotion Department in the South Western Area Health Board, has expanded. Alongside the Senior Health Promotion Officer for Tobacco for the region, we currently have four Health Promotion Officers for Smoking Cessation, one per community care area.

A reduction in tobacco use has been identified as the single most important health action that countries can take for both health and economic gain.¹ Tobacco use is the single, most important, preventable risk to human health.² Apart from respiratory and cardiovascular disease, it is responsible for approximately 35% of all cancers in our region² including 90% of all lung cancers.^{2,3} Environmental tobacco smoke has been accepted as a causal factor for coronary heart disease (CHD), as well as for lung cancer and for respiratory diseases in children.⁴

A cigarette is the only consumer product which, when consumed as desired, kills half of its regular customers. All of these deaths are preventable.

The National Health and Lifestyle Survey (Slan) reported in 1999, that 31% of adult respondents were regular or occasional cigarette smokers. The prevalence of smoking was slightly higher among males (32%) than females (31%) but when further categorised by age, the youngest female age group exhibited a significantly higher rate of 40%.

The recently published report on the health of staff across the Eastern Regional Health Authority⁵ identified the following:

- 90% of Staff felt that their employer should provide workplace smoking cessation programmes.
- Over 50% of staff expressed a desire to quit smoking within the next year.
- 63% of staff found environmental tobacco smoke bothersome at work.

¹ WHO, *Tobacco free*. 3rd action plan for a Tobacco Free Europe 1997-2001

² EHB. *Public Health in the Eastern Health Board region*, EHB Dept. of Public Health Sept. 1988

³ Department of Health and Children, *Cancer Services in Ireland: A National Strategy*. 1996

⁴ Department of Health and Children, *Building Healthier Hearts: The report of the Cardiovascular Health Strategy group*. 1999.

⁵ A Health Survey of Health Personnel in the Eastern Region. Department of Public Health 2001.

The majority of the adult population spends about one third of each day, five days a week at work, for most of their working lives. Smoke-free workplaces can save money, time and life.⁶

Workplace health promotion has the potential to be actively disseminated by employees to their families and social contacts outside the workplace, thus having an important effect on the wider community. For many, especially the young, the workplace can be a learning environment and can increase awareness of health issues and help to establish healthier behaviours.⁷

Background

The Public Health Report, “A Health Survey of Health Personnel in the Eastern Region”, February 2002, states that smoking is a major issue for 21% of staff who currently smoke. Most want to quit, and have tried on between two to three occasions in the past, with only 3% of regular smokers wanting to continue smoking. Supports desired by employees ranged family and friends support to stop smoking schemes. Exposure to environmental tobacco smoke in the workplace was an issue for the majority of respondents, smokers and non-smokers. Smoking restrictions in the workplace were desired by 99% of respondents.

The key objectives in our regional tobacco control strategy 2001 – 2005, are

- to support individuals who wish to quit smoking through the provision of support services, including counselling and smoking cessation groups.
- To support the rights of non-smokers to a smoke free environment
- To reduce the numbers of young people taking up smoking through education campaigns, skills development, healthy public policy and supportive environment

Aims

The over all aims of this survey were to:

1. Consult with staff of the South Western Area Health Board with regard to how they would like to receive information and support on smoking cessation.
2. Obtain and collate data on staff's smoking habits and their support needs for the purpose of developing appropriate smoking cessations support services.

⁶ Smoke Free Workplaces: Improve the health and well being of people at work. A project of the European network for Smoking Prevention (ENSP), 2001.

⁷ Department of Health and Children, Health Promotion Unit. *Health Promotion in the Workplace: Healthy Bodies – healthy work*, 1988

Methodology

A staff questionnaire was developed, in consultation with the Department of Public Health, Eastern Regional Health Authority. After several draft and went through several draft forms, consultations and feedback a final questionnaire was drafted. (Appendix 1)

Agreement was made with the Salaries/Payment Department of the South Western Area Health Board, in Dr. Steevens, for the month of November 2002, that all staff's pay slips would have this questionnaire as an insert. (e.g. weekly, fortnightly and monthly payments).

Response Rate

A self-report questionnaire was used. The total sample was 5,706 staff members in the South Western Area Health Board who were on the payroll in November 2002.

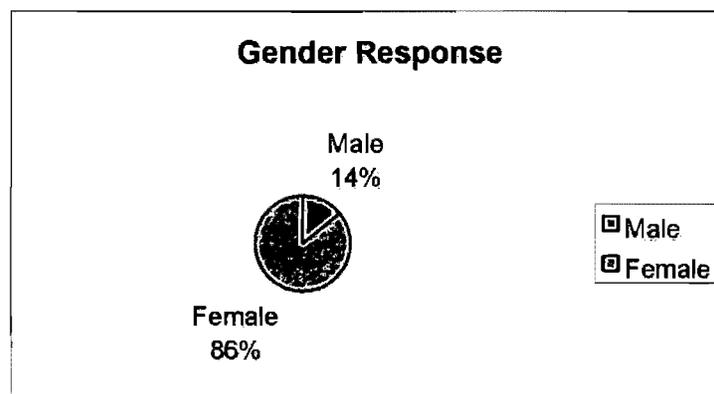
177 questionnaires were returned, representing a 3.49 % response. Of these 105 (59.32 %) were current smokers and 72 (40.68%) respondents were currently non-smokers.

Results

- The work location of respondents are as follows:

Hospital	24
Office	39
Health Centre	21
Other	19
Non response	74

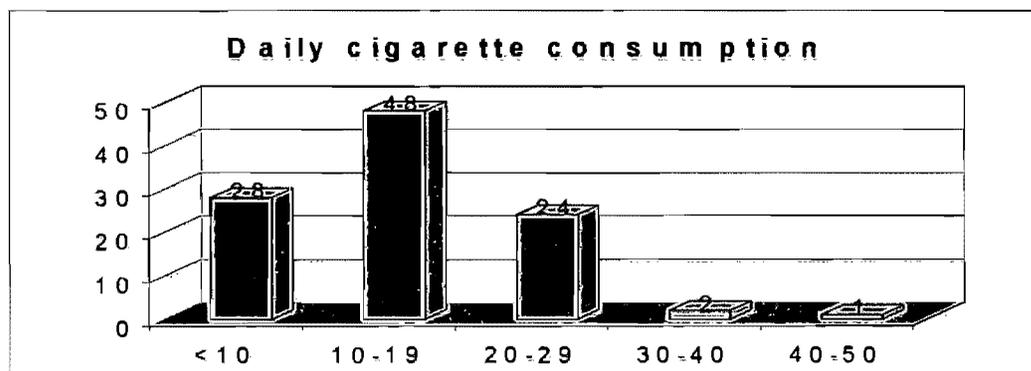
- The gender response can be broken down as follows:



- The age range of the respondents was from 20 to 63 years of age

When asked, how many cigarettes do you currently smoke daily?

- 28 participants said that they smoked less than 10 a day
- 48 people stated that they consumed between 10 and 19
- 24 respondents smoke 20 to 29 cigarettes a day
- 2 participants reported smoking between 30 and 40 a day.
- 1 person stated that they smoked 40 to 50 daily.

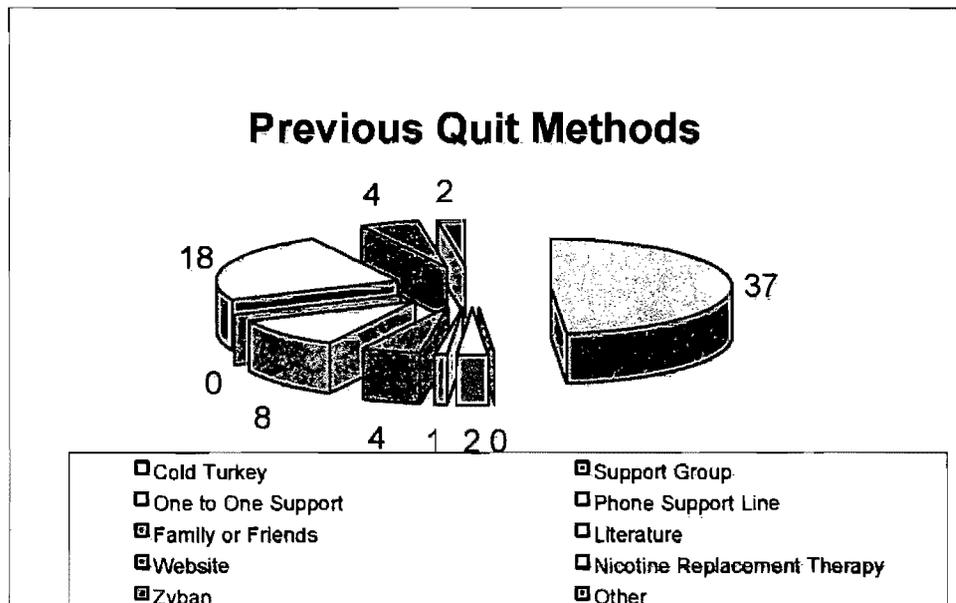


Tried to give up smoking in the last year?

Yes	50
No	122
Non response	5

Methods used in previous quit attempts were as follows:

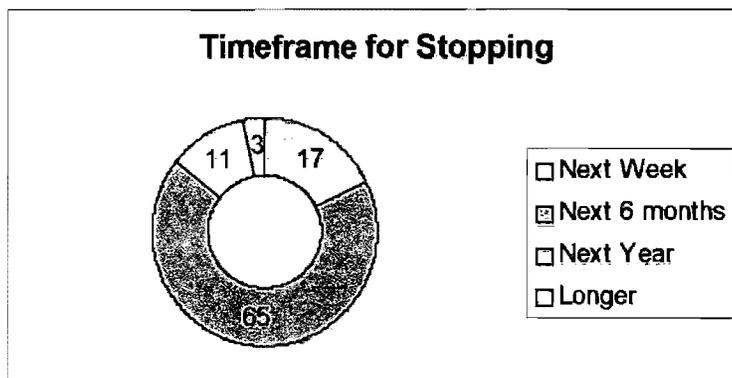
- “Cold turkey”, was the most popular response, with 48% of the participants.
- Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) was used by 24% of the participants.
- Literature was popular with 11% of the respondents.
- Family and friends and Zyban both were stated as helpful by 5% of the people.
- One to One support was used by 3%.
- Phone line support was used by 1%.
- No respondents reported using website or group support.



- **Number of respondents, currently smoking (n=105) interested in stopping smoking:**

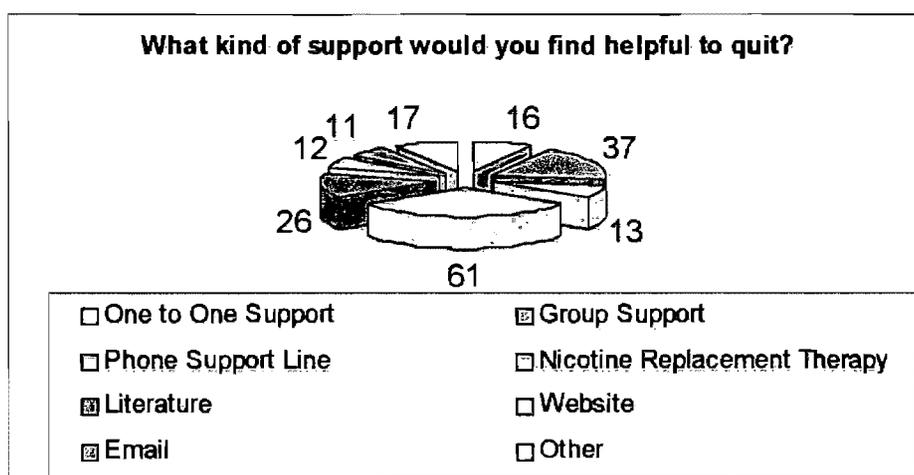
Yes	98
No	6
Non response	1

- Of the 98 respondents that were interested in stopping the majority of them, 86% were interested in stopping within the next six months. The break down is as follows:
 - Next week - 18%
 - Next 6 months - 68%
 - Next year - 11%
 - Longer - 3%



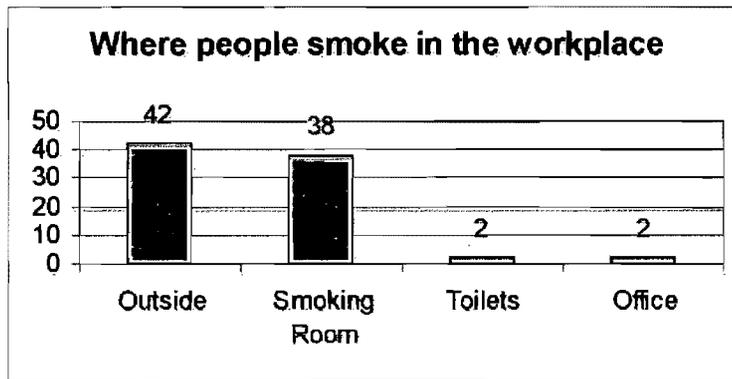
Types of support helpful for quitting were cited as follows:

- 32% felt that they would find Nicotine Replacement Therapy helpful.
- 19% people would find group support helpful.
- 13% people felt that literature would be helpful.
- 8% of the respondents stated that they would find One to One support helpful.
- 7% people felt that a phone support line would be helpful to them.
- 6% of the participants stated that a website was seen as helpful and 6% of the people stated that e-mail would be helpful.



- **When asked if people smoked in the workplace the response was as follows:**

Yes	84
No	18
Non response	3



Summary of findings

- 98 respondents of the 105 current smokers are interested in stopping smoking within the next six months. This represents 86% of the smokers who returned the questionnaire.
- 61 staff (32%) of people stated that they would find Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) helpful to quit
- 37 participants (19%) said that they would find group support helpful
- 26 respondents (13%) reported that they would require literature to help them in a quit attempt.
- 17 people (8%) felt that one to one support would benefit to quit.
- 13 of the smoker who are interested in stopping (7%), stated that they would find a phone support line of benefit to them
- 12 participants (6%) believe that a website would be of benefit to them to quit.
- 11 respondents (6%) would use e-mail as a support to them to quit smoking.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This questionnaire set out to consult with the staff of the South Western Area Health Board on their views and opinions on how they would like to receive information and support on smoking cessation and for us to obtain and collate the data on staff's smoking habits and their support needs.

This survey provides us with valuable information on our Staff's smoking habits and what type of supports they require to enable them to quit smoking.

Respondents who had made a previous quit attempt were asked, from a list, to indicate what type of supports they would find helpful in a next quit attempt. The response indicates that extra supports would be helpful in a quit attempt.

- Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) – 32%
- Group Support – 19%
- Literature – 13%
- One to One Support – 8%
- Phone Line Support – 7%
- Website – 6%
- E-mail – 6%

This valuable information from staff allows us to plan services, based on the above breakdown of need, to support the staff of the South Western Area Health Board in their next quit attempt, more efficiently and effectively.

Appendix One



Are you a Smoker?

If so, we need your help to develop smoking cessation support services for staff. Please complete and return this questionnaire to the address below. Thank you.



Staff Questionnaire

1. Exact work Location: - Hospital Office Health Centre other
2. Occupation _____
3. Gender Male Female
4. Date of Birth _____
5. How many cigarettes do you currently smoke daily?
None <10 10-19 20-29 30-40 40-50 50-60 60+
6. If you are a current smoker, have you tried to give up smoking in the last year?
Yes No
7. If yes, which of the following methods did you use? (more than one answer can be ticked) Cold turkey Support Group One to One support
Phone support line Family/friends literature Website
Nicotine Replacement Therapy Zyban other
8. Are you interested in stopping smoking? Yes No
9. If yes, when? next week within the next 6 mths next year longer
10. If stopping what kind of support would you find helpful? (more than one answer can be ticked)
One to one support Support Group Phone support line
Nicotine Replacement Therapy Literature Website E-mail other
11. Do you smoke in the workplace? Yes No
If Yes, where? Outside Smoking Room Toilets Office other

Thank you for taking the time to return this questionnaire.

Please return by 6th December 2002 to:-

Return Address: - Smoking Cessation Service, Health Promotion Department, 3rd Floor, 52, Broomhill Road, Tallaght, D. 24.