



NHS TOBACCO BILL TOPS £2.7 BILLION A YEAR

NEW RESEARCH has revealed that the cost to the NHS in England of treating smoking related illness reached £2.7 billion a year by 2007. This equates to £50 million every week.

The data – being presented at the NCRI Conference in Birmingham this week – form part of a ten year review of the 1998 Smoking Kills White Paper, called Beyond “Smoking Kills”.

This new report - published by Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) in collaboration with Cancer Research UK and the British Heart Foundation and endorsed by over 100 health and welfare organisations - shows that when Smoking Kills was published ten years ago the cost of smoking to the NHS in England was estimated to be up to £1.7 billion a year. Using NHS spending data this new report reveals this cost has risen by £1 billion despite a drop in the number of smokers.

The reason behind the continued rise is a combination of factors. These include more expensive treatments and better survival times for people with smoking-related diseases, combined with a better understanding of the range of diseases caused by smoking.

Researchers analysed the cost to the NHS of all smoking-related conditions including respiratory disorders, heart disease, cancer and circulatory conditions.

The report shows that tobacco plays a key role in many of the UK's main killer diseases. Smoking related illness accounts for a quarter of the cost of hospital care for adult respiratory disease and one third of the cost for circulatory diseases among adults aged between 35-64.

Researchers also highlight that an estimated £380 million has been saved by the NHS as a result of public health strategies aimed at reducing the prevalence of smoking. The ban on tobacco advertising, mass media campaigns to encourage people to quit and the creation of stop smoking clinics are among the measures that have contributed to fewer people smoking.

Around 22 per cent of the population currently smoke compared to around 28 per cent of the population back in 1998.

Tobacco consumption is recognised as the UK's single greatest cause of preventable illness and early death with over 100,000 people dying each year from smoking-related diseases.

“Smoking Kills” provided the first national tobacco control strategy that helped put the UK among world leaders in tobacco control. The white paper set out the scale of the problem and set targets for reducing smoking rates. It also set out an action plan including banning tobacco advertising and providing support for smokers wanting to quit.

Christine Callum, who led the research, said: “Cigarette smoking in England is responsible for one in six deaths of adults aged 35 and over. In addition to lives being cut short many smokers also experience years of mild to severely debilitating ill-health, the trauma of associated medical procedures and dependence on powerful medication. Whether in quality of life or financial impact on the NHS, the cost of smoking represents a price we should never have had to pay.”

Deborah Arnott, director of ASH which commissioned the Beyond “Smoking Kills” report, said: “Ten years have passed since Smoking Kills was published and we've had tremendous success in helping smokers who want to quit. Ten years ago there were nearly 12 million smokers in England and now there are only 9 million, yet still the vast majority of smokers say they want to quit, so there is much more to be done. From the evidence of the last ten years we know what works, and an ambitious new strategy could halve the number of smokers by 2015”

Jean King, Cancer Research UK's director of tobacco control, said: “These large economic figures shouldn't distract from the tragic human cost of smoking. The harsh reality is that half of all long-term smokers will die from this addiction so it's vital we continue working to reduce the impact that tobacco has on the lives of so many people. Removing tobacco products from sight at the point of sale, removing cigarette vending machines and making plain packaging compulsory for tobacco products are just three of the measures we would like introduced to help protect people from tobacco and save lives.”

For media enquiries please contact Paul Thorne in the Cancer Research UK press office on 020 7061 8352 or, out of hours, the duty press officer on 07050 264059.

Notes to editor:

Beyond “Smoking Kills” is being presented at a parliamentary reception on Tuesday, October 7, 2008.

The report has been compiled by a team of scientific and medical experts, chaired by Peter Kellner, President of YouGov.

Smoking is the single biggest cause of cancer and accounts for more than one in four UK cancer deaths.

Smoking causes nine in ten cases of lung cancer. Lung cancer has one of the lowest survival rates of all cancers, and is the most common cause of cancer death in the UK.

Smoking also increases the risk of over a dozen other cancers including cancers of the mouth, voice box, food pipe, liver, pancreas, stomach, kidney, bladder and cervix, as well as some types of leukaemia.

Across the UK, Tobacco tax currently provides just over £8 bn in revenue to the Treasury.

Costs of smoking attributable disease as a percentage of total costs for adult admissions by disease group (age 35+)

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Condition	Cost to the NHS	% of hospital admissions caused by smoking
Respiratory disease	£250 million	24%
Cancer	£270 million	16%
Circulatory disease	£420 million	16%
Circulatory disease (age 35-64)		34%
Circulatory disease (age 65+)		11%

About the NCRI Cancer Conference

The National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) Cancer Conference is the UK's premier forum for disseminating advances across all aspects of cancer research.

About the NCRI

The National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) was established in April 2001. It is a UK-wide partnership between the government, charity and industry

which promotes co-operation in cancer research among the 21 member organisations for the benefit of patients, the public and the scientific community. www.ncri.org.uk

NCRI members are: the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI); Association for International Cancer Research; Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council; Breakthrough Breast Cancer; Breast Cancer Campaign; Cancer Research UK; CHILDREN with LEUKAEMIA, Department of Health; Economic and Social Research Council; Leukaemia Research; Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research; Macmillan Cancer Support; Marie Curie Cancer Care; Medical Research Council; Northern Ireland Health and Social Care (Research & Development Office); Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation; Scottish Government Health Directorates (Chief Scientist Office); Tenovus; Welsh Assembly Government (Wales Office of Research and Development for Health & Social Care); The Wellcome Trust; and Yorkshire Cancer Research.