

Celebrate Smoke-free Environments: The results of the Smoke-free Survey with Fremantle Hospital Health Service staff

December 2007

Prepared by the South Metropolitan Public Health Unit
in collaboration with the Fremantle Hospital Health
Service Smoke-free Implementation Working Party



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Health**



1.0 Introduction

In October 2006 the Minister of Health announced that all Department of Health buildings and premises would be smoke-free by 1 January 2008. The aim of the Smoke-free WA Health System Policy is to protect staff, patients and visitors against the harmful effects of Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS).

In response to the new policy, the Fremantle Hospital Health Service (FHHS) Smoke-free Working Party was established to oversee implementation of the new policy. In addition a FHHS Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) Sub-Committee of the Smoke-free Working Party was formed to specifically deal with patient and staff issues arising from the new policy. One of the sub-Committee's roles included implementing a staff smoke-free survey. The results of the survey are outlined in this report.

2.0 Aims

The aims of the survey were to ascertain:

- approximate numbers of staff who smoke
- whether staff are affected by ETS
- descriptions of how staff may be affected by ETS
- staff needs

3.0 Method

A brief self-administered survey was developed and disseminated in October 2007 to FHHS employees via staff payslips (Appendix 1). A \$100 Myer voucher was offered as a prize incentive to encourage staff participation.

4.0 Results

4.1 Response rate

There are approximately 3655 FHHS employees. Four hundred and eighty-nine surveys were completed with a response rate of approximately 13.4% (n = 489/3655).

4.2 Survey respondents' profile

4.2.1 Gender

The majority of survey respondents were female (n = 399/478, 83.5%), with 16.5% male (n = 79/478). Eleven respondents did not specify their gender.

4.2.2 Age

The respondents' ages fell within the range of 22 – 73 years of age.

4.2.3 Smoking status

Respondents were asked to categorise themselves as either a "non-smoker", "ex-smoker", "current smoker who wants to give up", "current smoker who wants to cut down" or "current smoker who doesn't want to give up." If they identified as an ex-smoker, then "how long since they had last smoked?" Almost 84% of respondents were non-smokers and/or ex-smokers (n=409) and 16.4% (n=80) were current smokers. A breakdown of respondents' profile is presented in Table 1 below.



Table 1 Fremantle Hospital staff smoking status

	No. of respondents n=489	% of respondents
Non-smokers	342	69.9
Ex-smokers	67	13.7
Current smokers who wanted to give up	57	11.7
Current smokers who wanted to cut down	14	2.9
Current smokers who don't want to give up	9	1.8

The length of time since ex-smokers had last smoked ranged from 2 weeks to 32 years.

4.3 Smoking at work

Current smokers were asked whether they smoked during working hours. A total of 151 respondents answered this question, which was greater than the number of actual smokers (n=80/489) as identified from "Smoking status" results above. This suggests non-smokers and ex-smokers also answered this question.

- 75% of respondents who smoked said they normally smoked during work hours (n = 60/80)
- 15% of respondents who smoked said they sometimes smoked during work hours (n = 12/80)
- 52.3% of all respondents who answered this question said they did not smoke during work hours (n = 79/151). This data contained confounding variables which were reported by non-smokers and ex-smokers

4.4 Staff support

Respondents were asked "Are you interested in any support in light of the new smoke-free policy?" Of the 140 people who answered this question, 71 respondents said they were not interested in support (50.7%) and 69 people indicated they were interested (49.2%). 86.2% of respondents who are currently smoking (n = 69/80) were interested in support. The data was confounded as non-smokers also answered this question.

Respondents were also asked to nominate their preferred support strategies. Respondents could choose more than one support strategy. A total of 60 respondents answered this question. The responses to staff support strategies are shown on Table 2.

Table 2 Staff support strategies responses

Options	No. of respondents
Eight weeks free NRT	60
NRT available to staff at cost price	40
Gums or lozenges at cost price	22
Quit Line	10
Quit support groups	15
Counselling	14



4. 4. 1 Preferred days to hold workplace support groups

Respondents were asked what days would be most preferable to attend a “workplace quit support group.”

More respondents (over 10) were interested in afternoons, with starting times ranging from 2pm onwards. Mornings, lunchtimes and evenings were the next preferred options with four or five respondents to each.

4.5 Exposure to second-hand smoke

Respondents were asked if they believed they are “exposed to second-hand smoke at work” and were asked to “describe” the effects. Twenty-seven people did not answer this question.

Out of the 462 staff who responded to the question, 46.8% (n=216/462) reported “yes” they believed they were exposed to second-hand smoke while 53.2% (n=246/462) of respondents reported “no”.

Descriptions of second-hand smoke are outlined below:

“Occasionally from walking by a group of people smoking”

“We have no staff room and must sit outside with staff and patients smoking”

“Constantly coming in any entrance”

“Walking into hospital, patient area on L5”

“In communal tea break areas”



5.0 Comments from staff

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide general comments in relation to the new smoke-free policy. The majority of respondents commented in favour of the new smoke-free policy. Examples of positive comments include:

“Smoke-free is a very good idea – especially because this is a hospital and (we) should reinforce positive health ideas”

“Smoke-free supports our right to breathe fresh air”

“Smoke-free! About time!”

Some respondents highlighted their concerns relating to the practical implementation and enforcement of the policy.

“How are you going to police the no smoking policies – are there to be any fines etc?”

“I’m concerned that when on night shift I will have to leave hospital grounds for my break”

“Stopping distressed family and friends of patients from smoking can compound an already volatile situation, especially in A&E (Accident and Emergency)”

“I particularly feel for mental health patients. I understand that smoking is one of the most difficult drugs to give up or go without”

Some respondents commented on the perceived additional break time smokers had compared to non-smokers.

“It’s unfair that smokers go out for so many breaks and us non-smokers don’t get that time back ever. 5 smokes a day is 5 minutes each smoke, 25-30 minutes extra each day”

“Smokers go out for a fag more often at work. I believe they do less work than a non-smoker. They should smoke during their meal breaks”

“Smokers have more breaks than non-smokers and this is unfair”

One staff member commented on the need to improve settings traditionally frequented by smokers.

“Need to rejuvenate area outside L5 Ladies Auxiliary so patients and staff can sit in a healthy smoke-free area – shame to have such a beautiful view with a ‘dingy’ setting”

6.0 Conclusion

A staff survey was implemented to ascertain approximate numbers of staff who smoke, if and how both smokers and non-smokers are affected by ETS and to identify staff support needs. The survey was an initiative of the FHHS NRT Sub-Committee.

The majority of respondents were non-smokers and/or ex-smokers. The preferred type of support reported was “8 weeks of free NRT.” The survey highlighted that many respondents welcomed the new smoke-free policy. The main concerns expressed related to staff and patient safety and enforcement.

Since implementation of the survey, eight weeks of free NRT was offered to staff via the FHHS Pharmacy Department with optimal uptake. As of December 2007, 75 Fremantle staff were registered on the NRT staff support program.



Delivering a Healthy WA

Appendix 1: Staff Survey

1 January 2008

Fremantle Hospital and Health Service goes smoke-free

Staff Needs Survey

As of 1 January 2008 WA Health facilities will become smoke-free. Staff who smoke will be offered support to control cravings and/or to quit smoking. The purpose of this survey is to identify staff needs for controlling cravings or to quit smoking. Please return your completed survey via internal mail marked 'Smoke-free Survey' by **Friday 19 October 2007**. You do not need to place your name onto the survey and all responses will remain 'Confidential'. For more information please contact Alex Smith, Chair of the FHHS Smoke-free Implementation Working Group on 9431 2008.

1. Which of the following best describes you? Please tick one only.

- A non-smoker - **Go to question 6**
- An ex-smoker. How long is it since you last smoked? _____
- A current smoker who wants to give up
- A current smoker who wants to cut down
- A current smoker who doesn't want to give up

2. Do you normally smoke during work hours? Please tick one only.

- Yes
- Sometimes
- No

3. Are you interested in any support in light of the new smoke-free policy?

- Yes - **Go to question 4**
- No - **Go to question 6**

4. Which support strategies below would you find helpful? Please tick all that apply.

- Eight weeks of free nicotine replacement therapy available to staff intending to quit
- Nicotine replacement therapy available to staff intending to quit at cost price following free supply
- Nicotine replacement gum or lozenges available at cost price
- Quit telephone helpline
- Quit smoking support groups
- Counselling

5. If you were interested in a quit support group please indicate when you would be able to attend?

Preferred days: _____ Preferred time: _____

6. Do you believe you are exposed to second-hand smoke at work?

- Yes. Please describe. _____
- No. Please describe. _____

7. Male/Female (please circle) **8. Age (Years)** _____

9. Any other comments? _____

WIN A PRIZE!!!

If you would like to be placed into a draw to win a \$100 Myer voucher please complete the survey, enter the following details, tear across dotted line above and return to the internal mail marked 'Smoke-free Survey'.

Name: _____

Contact number: _____ **Email:** _____

Please return via internal mail marked 'Smoking Survey' by Friday 19 October 2007



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