

## Jefferson's New Smoking Policies: Steps Toward a Healthier Work Environment

Tobacco use in America is a grave problem that affects millions of lives every year. Although rates of smoking in the United States have decreased in the past 50 years, nearly 18% of all US adults (more than 40 million people) continue to smoke cigarettes.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, smoking remains as the largest cause of preventable disease and mortality in this country.<sup>2</sup> Smoking cigarettes results in negative economic costs to an individual and the community. The estimated costs of smoking in the US are around \$133 billion in direct medical costs and, moreover, about \$150 billion in productivity losses each year.<sup>3</sup> In Philadelphia 23% of adults smoke, representing the highest adult smoking rate among the 10 largest US cities.<sup>4</sup>

The City of Philadelphia has two main tobacco policies designed to protect Philadelphians from tobacco-related illness: The *Clean Indoor Air Worker Protection Law*, which protects workers from secondhand smoke (SHS) in all workplaces, and the *Smokefree Parks and Recreation Centers Initiative*, which makes Philadelphia parks and recreations centers 100% smokefree.<sup>5</sup> Also significant is Philadelphia's \$2 tax on packs of cigarettes, which is expected to reduce smoking rates among adults. Further, Philadelphia-area universities<sup>6</sup>, including some academic medical centers<sup>7</sup>, have adopted tobacco-free policies in an attempt to reduce negative impacts of smoking among their students, employees and patrons of their services. These types of legislative efforts and organizational policy changes have been shown to effectively reduce the prevalence of primary smoking, increase cessation attempts and lower exposure to SHS at the organizational and population levels.<sup>8, 9, 10</sup>

Recently, the entire Jefferson enterprise (including the university, hospital, and related physician practices) implemented two initiatives designed to reduce the health impact of smoking among employees, students, patients, and other patrons. The first initiative, the Tobacco-Free Environment Policy (effective April 1, 2014), prohibits the use of all tobacco products on campus, within all Jefferson-owned buildings, and most public outdoor spaces. The second initiative, the Nicotine-Free Hiring Policy (effective July 1, 2014), maintains that Jefferson will no longer hire tobacco users, and will provide incentives for current employees who use tobacco to quit, including low-cost classes and discounts on health insurance premiums after quitting for 90 days. The main goal of both initiatives is to create and maintain a tobacco-free environment to "promote the safety, health, and wellness of all patients, employees, volunteers, faculty members, students, vendors, and visitors" at Jefferson.<sup>11</sup>

While empirical studies have shown that smoke-free workplace policies have been beneficial for the health of workers,<sup>12</sup> the Jefferson tobacco-free initiatives have met some resistance. Opponents of the Nicotine-Free Hiring Policy contend that the policy discriminates against smokers because potential candidates are excluded based on personal behavior that is seemingly unrelated to job performance. Further, critics state that such policies may inadvertently serve as a barrier to employment for minorities and those with low income because these groups have a higher prevalence of tobacco use.<sup>13, 14</sup> Finally, smokers complain that the Tobacco-Free Environment Policy, which is enforced by Jefferson security, leaves them nowhere to smoke on campus.

Despite these arguments, the implementation of Jefferson's tobacco policies is an important step toward a healthier Jefferson. First, the Tobacco-Free Environment Policy makes the healthy choice (i.e. not smoking on campus) the easy choice and ensures that our students, employees and patients can breathe clean, non-carcinogenic air. Second, the Nicotine-Free Hiring Policy excludes smokers because smoking has a negative effect on job performance, through decreased productivity and increased absenteeism. Recent research concludes that smokers have a 33% higher risk of absenteeism compared to nonsmokers<sup>15</sup> and cost private employers an additional \$5,816 annually per employee.<sup>16</sup> Finally, although empirical studies have not found that Nicotine Free Hiring Policies reduce employment opportunities for demographic groups with higher smoking rates, this possible effect should be considered and evaluated.

To support the implementation of these policies, Jefferson has worked hard to provide incentives to employees who are current smokers in their attempts to quit. Ongoing cessation programs are provided as well as a Buddy Program that pairs smokers with employees who have successfully quit and serve as mentors throughout the cessation process. In an interview, Anna Tobia, PhD, the director of the *JeffQuit* cessation program on campus, highlighted that a main advantage of cessation on campus is that it is reimbursable by insurance for Jefferson employees. Dr. Tobia stated, "We are encouraged by the University and Hospitals' strong policy on helping people to not smoke, and we're really excited that they made sure that the insurance company... would reimburse at 100% for Jefferson

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

employees. (Jefferson) had a strong commitment to employees getting healthy, doing this (JeffQuit program) and getting their money back...Jefferson really stepped up to make this happen."

The policy changes are most important because they support Jefferson's mission of *Health is All We Do*, and are also compatible with the objectives of hospitals to improve the health of patients. In

addition to the positive effect on individual workers, these policies may help shift the norms of tobacco use toward abstaining from tobacco initiation, and also present immediate incentives for quitting. These two new policies represent big changes and have the potential to improve the health of the Jefferson community; this is a positive step toward making Jefferson a healthier place.

---

**Russell K. McIntire, PhD, MPH**

Assistant Professor  
Jefferson School of Population Health  
Russell.Mcintire@Jefferson.edu

**Amber Bowie**

MPH Student  
Jefferson School of Population Health  
Amber.Bowie@Jefferson.edu

## REFERENCES

1. Current cigarette smoking adults in the United States. Center for Disease Control and Prevention Web site. [http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/adult\\_data/cig\\_smoking/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/adult_data/cig_smoking/index.htm). Accessed March 9, 2014.
2. US Department of Health and Human Services. The health consequences of Smoking-50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General. <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/50-years-of-progress/fact-sheet.html>. Accessed November 20, 2014.
3. Smoking and Tobacco Use: Fast Facts Sheet. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/fast\\_facts/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fast_facts/index.htm). Updated April 24, 2014. Accessed November 22, 2014.
4. Community Profile: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dch/programs/CommunitiesPuttingPreventiontoWork/communities/profiles/both-pa-philadelphia.htm>. Updated October 25, 2013. Accessed November 22, 2014.
5. Bill no. 050063-A: Clean Indoor Air Worker Protection Law. City of Philadelphia. [http://www.phila.gov/health/pdfs/Philadelphias\\_Clean\\_Indoor\\_Air\\_Worker\\_Protection\\_Law\\_1\\_2.pdf](http://www.phila.gov/health/pdfs/Philadelphias_Clean_Indoor_Air_Worker_Protection_Law_1_2.pdf). Published December 14, 2006. Accessed November 22, 2014.
6. Data Brief: Smoke-free Colleges and Universities. Philadelphia Department of Public Health. [http://www.smokefreephilly.org/smokfree\\_philly/assets/File/SF%20campuses%20data%20brief.pdf](http://www.smokefreephilly.org/smokfree_philly/assets/File/SF%20campuses%20data%20brief.pdf). Published September 2014. Accessed November 23, 2014.
7. Thomas Jefferson University Human Resources. Smoke-free Jefferson- Frequently asked questions. [http://www.jefferson.edu/content/dam/tju/human\\_resources/files/benefits/LiveWell/Smokefree%20FAQs.pdf](http://www.jefferson.edu/content/dam/tju/human_resources/files/benefits/LiveWell/Smokefree%20FAQs.pdf). Accessed November 24, 2014.
8. Kouvonen A, Kivimäki M, Oksanen T. et al. Implementation of workplace-based smoking cessation support activities and smoking cessation among employees: the Finnish public sector study. *Am J Pub Health*. 2012; 102(7):e56-e62. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2012.300823.
9. Seo D, Macy JT, Torabi MR, Middlestadt SE. The effect of a smoke-free campus policy on college students' smoking behaviors and attitudes. *Preventive Medicine*. 2011; 53:347-352. doi:10.1016/j.ypmed.2011.07.015.
10. Hopkins DP, Razi A, Leeks KD, et al. Smokefree Policies to Reduce Tobacco Use: A Systematic Review. *Am J Prev Med*. 2009;38(2):S275-S289. DOI: 10.1016/j.amepre.2009.10.029.
11. Teufel P. Tobacco-free environment and hiring policy. <http://tjuh3.jeffersonhospital.org/policy/index.cfm/hr/view/id/225685>. Accessed November 24, 2014.
12. Bauer JE, Hyland A, Li Q, et al. A longitudinal assessment of the impact of some-free worksite policies on tobacco use. *Am J Public Health*. 2015;95(6):1024.
13. Rusek M. Is anti-smoking employment policy smart health care or merely discrimination? Newsworks. <http://www.newsworks.org/index.php/local/speak-easy/65464-is-anti-smoking-employment-policy-smart-health-care-or-merely-discrimination>. March 3, 2014. Accessed March 14, 2015.
14. Schmidt H, Voigt K, Emanuel EJ. The ethics of not hiring smokers. *N Eng J Med*. 2013; 368(15):1369-1371. doi: 10.1056/NEJMp130195.
15. Weng S, Ali S, Leonardi-Bee J. Smoking and absence from work: a systematic review and meta-analysis of occupational studies. *Addiction*. 2013;108(2):307-319. doi: 10.1111/add.12015.
16. Berman M, Crane R, Seiber E, Munur M. Estimating the cost of a smoking employee. *Tobacco Control*. 2014;23(5):428-433.