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U.S. SURGEONS GENERAL ENDORSE PLAN TO REDUCE SMOKING, SAVE 3 MILLION LIVES
American Journal of Public Health publishes 10-point action plan today

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Top public health organizations came together today to announce a National Action Plan to address tobacco's toll in the United States, especially on minority and lower-income Americans. The 10-point action plan provides the necessary steps -- both federal initiatives and public-private partnerships -- to help five million Americans quit smoking within one year, and ultimately, prevent approximately three million premature deaths.

The plan, *A National Action Plan for Tobacco Cessation*, is featured in the February edition of the *American Journal of Public Health*, released today, which is devoted to tobacco and disparities. In addition to the action plan, the journal also includes an editorial by three former U.S. surgeons general endorsing the plan.

Former Surgeons General Dr. C. Everett Koop, Dr. Julius Richmond and Dr. David Satcher spoke publicly today to underscore the need for the plan and to call upon the federal government to implement it. The Surgeons General joined with the American Public Health Association, the University of Wisconsin's Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention and the American Legacy Foundation to make this important announcement today.

"Our investment in science and public health has given us the tools to prevent much of the death, disease and economic costs resulting from tobacco-caused illnesses," Koop said. "This action plan is grounded in decades of science, can dramatically reduce tobacco and would prevent at least three million premature deaths, if we have the will to implement it."

Cheryl Heaton, Dr. P.H., president and CEO of the American Legacy Foundation, focused on tobacco use as a social justice issue both during the announcement and in an article also published in the journal.

"At the American Legacy Foundation, we've recognized that tobacco is most likely to addict those who have the least information about the health risks of smoking, the fewest resources and the least social support and access to cessation services," Heaton said. "The plan presented today is a huge step toward providing much needed resources to lower income and minority populations."

The action plan outlines a series of science-based action steps that will reduce tobacco consumption and promote cessation across all segments of the population, but especially among Americans who are most adversely affected by tobacco use -- the poor, the least educated and certain racial and ethnic minorities.

Dr. Michael Fiore, chair of the Subcommittee on Cessation and director of the University of Wisconsin Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention, prepared the action plan presented today. He compared the nation's need to address the tobacco epidemic to the way the nation handled polio in the 1950's.

"Only through a significant commitment, including federal funds, were we able to eradicate polio. Unlike polio, we don't have a single injection that can inoculate Americans from tobacco dependence. But we do have many effective treatments that can help people break free of their addiction to tobacco use," Fiore said. "We have outlined a plan today that, if implemented, will make these treatments readily available to anyone in this country who wants to quit smoking."

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U.S. surgeons general offer plan to reduce smoking/ add one

The National Action Plan includes six federal initiatives and four public-private partnerships. The 10 points are:

Federal Initiatives:

- A nationwide tobacco-cessation quit line
- A national paid media campaign encouraging cessation
- Insurance coverage for cessation for all 100 million federally covered lives, including Medicare and Medicaid recipients
- New tobacco research, designed to improve treatment of dependence and eliminate disparities
- Training for clinicians in treating tobacco use to insure that every smoker who visits a healthcare provider receives effective cessation treatment
- A Smokers Health Fund dedicated to reducing tobacco use by funding other elements of this plan through a \$2 per-pack federal excise tax increase on cigarettes

Public-Private Partnerships:

- Mobilize health insurers, employers and others to foster tobacco dependence coverage for all covered lives
- Mobilize health systems to implement changes that result in effective utilization of tobacco dependence treatments
- Mobilize national quality assurance and accreditation organizations and clinicians to establish and measure the treatment of tobacco dependence as part of standard care
- Mobilize communities to ensure that policies and programs are in place to increase demand for services and to ensure access to such services

The full plan is available at www.ctri.wisc.edu

“Forty years ago, the harmful effects of tobacco use were brought to light with the release of the first Surgeon General’s report,” said Dr. Georges Benjamin, executive director of the American Public Health Association. “Once that report was released, America began to recognize the dangers of tobacco use and public health education campaigns highlighted these harmful effects with great results.”

Public awareness and education have reduced tobacco’s toll, with the rates of tobacco use falling from 42 percent in 1965 to 23 percent today. But almost 50 million Americans continue to smoke, and now smokers are increasingly concentrated in underserved populations where treatment is less accessible. The National Action Plan takes current evidence-based treatment and makes it available to the populations who need it most.

The American Legacy Foundation® is dedicated to building a world where young people reject tobacco and anyone can quit. Located in Washington, DC, the foundation develops programs that address health effects of tobacco use through grants, technical assistance and training, youth activism, strategic partnerships, counter-marketing and grass roots marketing campaigns, public relations and outreach to populations disproportionately affected by the toll of tobacco. Legacy’s national programs include **Circle of Friends™**, **Great Start**, a **Priority Populations Initiative**, **Streettheory.org** and **truth®**. The foundation was created as a result of the November 1998 Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) reached between attorneys general from 46 states and the tobacco industry. **Visit www.americanlegacy.org.**

The Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention, a program of the University of Wisconsin Medical School, has provided cessation and prevention services in Wisconsin since 1992 and is a nationally recognized research center. The American Public Health Association, the oldest and largest organization of public health professionals in the world, publishes the American Journal of Public Health.

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