

Smoke free air laws lower heart attack rates

A study released on 12/31/08 by the CDC Office on Smoking and Health found a significant and sustained drop in heart attack hospitalizations in Pueblo, Colorado, after the implementation of a workplace and public places smoke-free law. The study, released this week in Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), found the decrease was sustained over a 3 year period. This is one of the first studies to look at the link between smoke-free laws and heart attack hospital admission rates over a three-year extended period of time. Smoke-free laws likely reduce heart attack hospitalizations both by reducing secondhand smoke exposure among nonsmokers

Researchers also looked at nearby similar sized communities that had not passed smoke-free laws, and found no substantial decrease in heart attack hospitalizations in those communities. The results from this study confirm the importance of adopting comprehensive smoke-free laws. The new study from Colorado adds to evidence from other communities and countries that smoke-free laws improve public health, that benefits can occur quickly, and that they are sustained over time.

In issuing a groundbreaking report on secondhand smoke in June 2006, U.S. Surgeon General Richard Carmona stated, "The debate is over. The science is clear: Secondhand smoke is not a mere annoyance, but a serious health hazard that causes premature death and disease in children and nonsmoking adults."

Secondhand smoke contains more than 4,000 chemicals, including at least 69 carcinogens. The Surgeon General found that secondhand smoke is a proven cause of lung cancer, heart disease, serious respiratory illnesses such as bronchitis and asthma, low birth weight and sudden infant death syndrome. The Surgeon General also found that secondhand smoke is responsible for tens of thousands of deaths in the United States each year, there is no safe level of exposure, and only smoke-free laws provide effective protection from secondhand smoke.

The evidence is also clear that smoke-free laws protect health without harming business. As the Surgeon

General concluded, "Evidence from peer-reviewed studies shows that smoke-free policies and regulations do not have an adverse impact on the hospitality industry."

The full report can be found at www.cdc.gov/mmwr.



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