



Dr. Leslie Stayner,
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SMOKING IN THE WORKPLACE IS OUT

UIC SPH Professor's Work Supports A Ban on Public Smoking

On January 1, 2008, smoking in nearly all public places will be illegal in Illinois. Gov. Rod Blagojevich signed the smoking ban into law on July 23, 2007, making Illinois the 19th state with a broad smoking ban.

"I am just thrilled," said Dr. Leslie Stayner, professor and director of epidemiology and biostatistics at the UIC School of Public Health. "January 1 will be a great day for Illinois."

Stayner recently led an analysis of nearly two dozen studies, which confirmed the association between passive smoke in the workplace and an increased risk of lung cancer. The research is posted online and appeared in the March print issue of the American Journal of Public Health.

Stayner and colleagues conducted a statistical analysis combining data from 22 studies evaluating workplace smoking exposure and lung cancer risk. They also analyzed workers' level and duration of exposure to passive smoke and their risk of lung cancer.

The researchers found a 24 percent increase in lung cancer risk among people exposed to passive smoke in the workplace. Workers who were highly exposed had a 100 percent increased (or doubled) risk of lung cancer, and workers with a long history, or duration, of exposure to passive smoke had a 50 percent increased risk.

"We believe this provides the strongest evidence to date of the relationship between workplace environmental tobacco smoke and lung cancer," said Stayner.

The research, Stayner said, has important policy implications for cities and states that have not yet legislated smoking bans in bars and restaurants where there are high levels of environmental smoke.

"We have a moral imperative to protect these workers," Stayner said. "There is no good reason why they should have to be exposed to this cancer-causing substance."

As for the argument that a smoking ban will hurt business, Stayner said the opposite may be true.

"There have been studies that looked at the economic impact of the smoking bans in San Francisco and New York and they have found no adverse affect on total city-wide income," he said. "It seems that people are going to these businesses who in the past might not have gone because of the smoke."

Stayner hopes that one day smoking bans will not be limited to several states.

"It would be wonderful to see a national approach and maybe even an international approach," he said.

According to an article in the Spring/Summer 2007 edition of the Harvard Public Health Review, smoke-free policies are sweeping the globe.

"In 2004, Ireland became the first country to establish a national ban on smoking in all indoor workplaces, including restaurants and bars," the article states. "Since then, more than a dozen countries have followed suit. For example, France enacted a ban in February 2007 covering offices, schools, and hospitals that will extend to all public establishments in January 2008."

The European Union is considering comprehensive smoke-free legislation for all 27 member nations, the article states.

"If the Parisians can do it, anyone can," Stayner said. "People seem to have adapted to taking their cigarettes outside." ■