

COVER STORY

Doctors turn up the heat on smoking

Cigarette ads, sales to kids, inconsistent laws targeted

By Mike Snider
USA TODAY

Alas, smokers. Just when you thought things couldn't get more uncomfortable.

Already most employers and restaurateurs sequester you and airlines won't let you smoke at all. You shiver

in doorways sneaking a puff. Well, get ready for more grief — from your doctor.

The American Medical Association is hot under the collar about tobacco advertisements, cigarette sales to minors and the lack of smoking laws. Today's entire *Journal of the American Medical Association* is devoted to anti-tobacco reports. And editor George D. Lundberg has a specific goal: "I want all physicians to take it as a personal responsibility to confront every patient they see about tobacco — no matter what they see them for — and to badger them about their tobacco use."

For the nation's 50 million-plus smokers, this aggressive move by the physicians' organization is the latest volley in a campaign to snuff out their habit. It's a campaign that has

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Patch is a new way to kick the habit

Tried nicotine gum, going cold turkey, even hypnosis — and still can't quit smoking?

A nicotine skin patch, due on the market in a month or so, might be the cure that sticks.

In a study of 935 one-pack-a-day smokers, 26% were able to quit after a 12-week program using the silver-dollar-size patch, says Dr. Stephen L. Rennard, University of Nebraska Medical Center, Omaha. Findings are in today's *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Only 2% of smokers can quit without any help, researchers say. Many who go cold turkey fail because of side effects (insomnia, depression, weight gain). The patch, which is worn on the shoulder, back or upper chest and releases nicotine into the body, greatly reduces those side effects, Rennard says.

His study was financed

by Marion Merrell Dow, which makes the patch and Nicorette nicotine gum, a smoking-cessation gum.

In the studies those tested wore patches of varying doses for the first six weeks and were told to quit smoking. For the next six-week period, they wore patches of progressively lower doses until they were weaned off nicotine. They also joined a support group.

Three months later, 1 in 4 patients treated with the highest-dose patch still were not smoking vs. 1 in 9 with placebos.

Marion's patch and another from Ciba-Geigy recently were approved by the Food and Drug Administration. Ciba-Geigy plans to have its version on the market by the end of the year. Cost: \$3 to \$4 a day.

Marion cannot distribute its patches yet because of a pending patent infringement suit.

— Mike Snider

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