



Media Release

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Southland and Otago DHBs Launch Revised Smokefree Policy

Southland and Otago DHBs are committed to protecting their communities from the harm caused by smoking and are launching a revised and stronger Smokefree policy to reaffirm this fact.

The revised Smokefree (Auahi Kore) Policy, launched this week, outlines the DHBs' commitment to providing a smokefree environment for all patients, staff and visitors.

It also states how the DHBs will ensure all hospitalised patients who smoke are provided with on-going support and advice to quit by using the ABC approach (an evidence based cessation programme introduced to hospitals in 2009).

"Smoking is the largest preventable cause of death and illness in New Zealand and the DHBs recognise their role in helping to reduce smoking related illnesses and deaths," says Pip Stewart, Otago DHB's Women's Children's and Public Health Group Manager.

"As health professionals we need to do everything in our power to promote the Smokefree message and offer ongoing help and support for smokers to quit."

"Therefore we have realigned and revised Southland and Otago DHBs' previous policies into a new document which outlines our commitment to Smokefree promotion and cessation support and strengthens staff accountabilities for making sure these guidelines are implemented and maintained."

The revised Smokefree policy states clearly that smoking is prohibited in (or on) all premises (including outdoor areas) and in any vehicles owned by Otago and Southland DHBs.

"It is up to everyone to remind each other that smoking is not permitted on DHB grounds," says Ms Stewart. "We are establishing a culture where staff and visitors are confident enough to remind smokers that the DHB grounds are smokefree and to let patients know that help and support is available. Members of the public who want further information can contact the Quitline on 0800 778 778 or www.quit.org.nz."

While the Mental Health services at both DHBs have each had an area designated for smoking in the past, Ms Stewart says the intention is that these areas will be removed once the new ABC approach to smoking cessation and the use of nicotine replacement therapy is better established. Ms Stewart said that it was important for patients to know that support will be provided for smokers who are admitted to hospital.

The ABC approach educates clinical staff to ask all patients if they smoke. If they do, smokers will be reminded that stopping smoking is the best thing that they can do for their health and offered treatments such as nicotine replacement therapy to treat withdrawal symptoms while in hospital.

The government has set a health target for 80% of hospitalised smokers to be offered help and advice to quit by July 2010. Monthly reporting has shown the percentage of patients being offered this support continues to rise at both DHBs. In February 2010, 38% of smokers admitted to hospitals in Otago and 47.8% in Southland have been given support.

"This demonstrates the tremendous amount of work being done by health professionals across our hospitals and that smokers are keen to make use of smoking cessation advice and support when offered to them," says Ms Stewart.

"The combination of the ABC approach to smoking and the revised Smokefree policy will play an important part in helping smokers that want support to Quit and improving the well being of our communities."

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Media Queries:

Please contact Jo Harvey, Regional Communications Officer, Southland and Otago DHBs , on 027 674 1758.