



Media Release

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Parental communication key to preventing smoking in teens

Parents hold more influence over whether their children are likely to take up smoking than what they may think, New Zealand researchers told the Oceania Tobacco Control Conference today (7 Oct) in Darwin, Australia.

Researchers from the University of Otago undertook a study across a range of New Zealand schools* and found some key determining factors for smoking in Year 6 and Year 10 students.

Lead researchers, Professor Richard Edwards and Andrew Waa, said that younger students who had poor communication with their parents were more susceptible to starting smoking.

Anti-smoking attitudes of parents and having a smoke-free home also bore an impact on whether a student was likely to start smoking.

"We identified a number of key factors which may influence whether an adolescent is susceptible to taking up smoking, with parental communication being the most significant for both Maori and non-Maori Year 6 students," Professor Edwards said.

"Another major factor was the amount of pocket money a adolescent receives. Those receiving over \$20 pocket money per week are at a high risk of developing a smoking habit, especially if parents are not monitoring what the pocket money is being spent on."

The research also highlighted that Year 6 Maori students in particular, had a higher risk if they were exposed to second-hand smoke at home and if their parents had a relaxed attitude toward rules such as bedtimes or completing homework.

Year 10 Maori students had a particularly high risk of smoking if they believed their parents wouldn't be upset if they were caught smoking.

"The research suggests that parents have a bigger role to play in whether their child starts smoking than what they may think," Professor Edwards said.

"Parents need to be aware of the influence they have over their children starting to smoke and should be encouraged to engage with them and make it clear that they disapprove of smoking, even if they themselves smoke.

“Our research suggests that to minimise the risk of their children smoking, parents also need to ban smoking in the house, monitor what pocket money is spent on and ensure general household rules are adhered to.”

The study was undertaken by three primary researchers, Andrew Waa, Richard Edwards and Deepa Weerasekera from the Health Promotion and Policy Research Unit, University of Otago, Wellington.

The research will be presented at 2.30 pm AEST / 5.00 pm NZDT today at the Oceania Tobacco Control Conference, Darwin Convention Centre, Northern Territory Australia.

Notes to editors:

*Students were included in surveys conducted by the Health Sponsorship Council of New Zealand.

Year 6 students were aged 10-11 years and Year 10 students were aged 14-15 years.

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