

Media Release 26 July 2006

New quit smoking campaign warns of mouth cancer risk to smokers

New data from The SA Cancer Registry show around 270 South Australians are diagnosed with mouth cancer every year.

The data comes at the same time a confronting new quit smoking advertisement, depicting a woman with mouth cancer, hits television screens nationally.

Although the risk of dying from mouth and throat cancer is **higher among smokers** compared with someone who has never smoked, awareness about the relationship between smoking and oral disease remains alarmingly low.

Only five per cent of smokers are aware that smoking causes mouth cancer, with only 15% of smokers being able to identify, without prompting, that smoking causes throat cancer.

The data from The Cancer Council South Australia shows that:

- **270 South Australians were diagnosed** with mouth cancer
- Mouth cancer **claimed the lives of 41 South Australians**
- Statistics since the late 70's show 96% of people diagnosed with lip cancer have a five-year survival rate, and only 54% for intral oral cancer.

Dr Bob Jones, an Oral Maxillo Facial Surgeon at the Royal Adelaide Hospital, said that smoking has potentially devastating effects on the mouth.

"Advanced cancers of the mouth and throat can cause chronic pain, loss of function and disfigurement. Breathing, talking, eating, chewing and swallowing can all be affected."

Dr Jones said early detection of mouth and throat cancer could increase the chance of survival.

"Cancers of the mouth and throat can be incredibly destructive, so it is vital to remember that early detection significantly increases the chances of patient's survival."

"Diseases of the mouth and throat can be developing for years before a diagnosis is made. A sore mouth that does not heal, persistent swelling, a lump in the mouth or thickening in the mouth are just some of the early signs of mouth cancer that can become crippling or fatal

Stopping smoking halves the risk of mouth and throat cancers within five years and the risk continues to decline over time. After ten years the risk of mouth cancer is similar to someone who has never smoked." said Dr Jones

Manager of Quit SA, Mr David Edwards, said he hoped the new mouth cancer campaign would help address the lack of understanding about the health effects of smoking.

"The concept for the mouth cancer media campaign was tested with smokers of all ages and backgrounds, and it was found to have a strong impact."

"This is incredibly important in light of The SA Cancer Registry data, which reminds us that the majority of smokers are still in the dark when it comes to the devastating relationship between smoking and mouth and throat cancers."

"People who smoke expose their mouth to all 4000 chemicals found in tobacco smoke. However, there is some good news for smokers who can reduce their risk of mouth and throat cancers by making the decision to quit, and enjoy a smoke free lifestyle.

The advertisement, produced by The Campaign Palace/Red Cell, is part of a new national quit smoking campaign that has been developed in collaboration between state and territory smoking and health programs.

If you need help and support to quit smoking, call the Quitline on 13 7848

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