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Data shows smokers unaware of gangrene risk, as graphic new quit smoking campaign is launched

A confronting new quit smoking advertisement called 'Amputation,' detailing the relationship between smoking and gangrene, is set to hit television screens nationally tonight.

The advertisement focusing on the amputation of a gangrenous foot caused by peripheral vascular disease (PVD), follows shocking new data from The Cancer Council Victoria revealing almost 3 out of 4 of smokers are unaware that smoking causes gangrene, a serious side effect of PVD.

PVD occurs when the arteries that carry blood to your legs or arms become partially or totally blocked by the build up of fatty material on your artery walls.

Smoking causes 40% of PVD in men and 34% of PVD in women in Australia and smokers are two and a half times more likely to develop PVD than someone who has never smoked.

Mr David Edwards, Manager Quit SA, said although smoking causes many diseases other than lung cancer, the data illustrates that many smokers are still in the dark when it comes to the health risks of smoking.

"While people are generally aware that tobacco smoking is harmful, many still underestimate the extent of the danger relative to other lifestyle risks."

"When you smoke toxic chemicals go into your bloodstream and travel to every part of your body so there is really no area that is immune from damage caused by smoking."

Mr David Edwards, Manager Quit SA, said that graphic health warnings on tobacco products are essential to ensure smokers receive regular information on the harms of smoking, and that the tobacco industry so far seemed to be deliberately stalling their introduction.

"The tobacco industry has been unforgivably slow to introduce new warnings. Every single day they continue to delay the new warnings, they are jeopardising the health of any smoker who may have been inspired to quit after seeing the graphic images including the image highlighting PVD."

Mr Larry Ferguson, Head of Vascular at **The Royal Adelaide Hospital** said smoking is the number one risk factor for PVD, and over 80% of people with PVD are either smokers or ex-smokers.

"People who smoke are likely to worsen their symptoms of PVD, and as a result increase their risk of amputation," said **Mr Ferguson**.

"Compared to smokers, people who quit smoking have less severe pain when walking and are less likely to develop pain at rest. They live longer, respond better to treatment, and are less likely to require amputation."

"Quitting smoking will reduce your risk of developing PVD and the longer you have quit, the lower your risk of developing symptoms of PVD."

Mr Ferguson said other risk factors for PVD include diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol levels and noted that if you have more than one of these risk factors, your risk of PVD increases.

The 'Amputation' 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.

David Edwards said the aim of the campaign was to motivate and remind smokers to quit, and that an important part of this campaign is making sure that smokers know that they can get professional help to quit by phoning the Quitline on 13 QUIT (13 7848).

David Edwards is available for comment on 0419 819 923

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