

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Health Promotion saving money and lives

The Editor

Health promotion initiatives are having immediate and positive effects on the health care system and the cost of sustaining it according to a recently released study in the Canadian Medical Association Journal.

The study showed that the ban on smoking in restaurants and bars in Ontario resulted in a steep drop in hospital admissions for cardiovascular and respiratory problems. The research shows that in the three-year period after anti-smoking bylaws were implemented banning smoking in restaurants, hospitalizations fell 39 per cent for heart conditions and 32 per cent for respiratory conditions and the number of heart attacks decreased by 17 per cent.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Nova Scotia believes that it is essential to base health policy on evidence and this study validates the tremendous work that the tobacco ban has done to reduce chronic disease and stress on the health care system.

The effectiveness of the smoking ban was enhanced because it was part of a comprehensive approach to tobacco reduction including increases to tobacco taxes, new advertising rules for tobacco products, graphic warnings added to cigarette packages and awareness campaigns on the dangers of smoking. When looking at other health promotion strategies we need to learn from the success of tobacco reduction strategies that take this comprehensive approach.

Governments need to take the lead in promoting healthy lifestyles and in supporting physical activity and healthy eating as a part of our every day lives to ensure that we can continue to combat chronic disease. This leadership has been shown in Nova

Scotia by the development of a stand-alone Department of Health Promotion and Protection, which is now being developed in Ontario and BC and is expected in more provinces in the near future.

Nova Scotia has among the highest rates of heart disease and stroke, cancer and adult diabetes in Canada. The cost of health care has become unsustainable for Nova Scotia and most Canadian provinces, which is largely due to chronic diseases resulting from smoking, alcohol, unhealthy eating and inactivity. Health promotion is the largest part of the solution for making our health care system sustainable.

In the Canadian Medical Association Journal, Dr. Richard Stanwick, chief medical health officer for the Vancouver Island Health Authority, said the impact of smoking bans is seen, not only in the statistics, but on the ground, as shortly after Victoria introduced a smoking ban in restaurants in 1999 he said, "there was a reduced need for cardiologists - we actually needed one less." Dr. Alan Maryon-Davis of the department of primary care and public health sciences at King's College in London, said the new research "adds to the growing body of evidence that legislation banning smoking can save lives, and that it begins to do so quickly."

The benefits of investing in health promotion, such as comprehensive tobacco strategies, are a smart and vital for us as a society. We need to continue to support similar strategies in healthy eating and physical activity to ensure a sustainable health future for our children and ourselves.

Menna MacIsaac, CEO
Heart and Stroke Foundation of N.S.

May is Cystic Fibrosis Month

The Editor

Cystic fibrosis (CF) is the most common, fatal genetic disease affecting Canadian children and young adults. For the first time ever, there are more adults than children living with CF in Canada. Although there has been tremendous research efforts and improvements in drugs and therapy, there is still no cure for CF.

Cystic fibrosis is a multi-organ disease, primarily affecting the lungs and digestive system. A build-up of thick mucus in the lungs causes severe breathing problems. Difficulty clearing the bacteria from the lungs leads to cycles of infection and inflammation, which damage the delicate lung tissues.

If your physician suspects you have CF, he/she may recommend a 'sweat test'. Simple and painless, this test measures the amount of salt in your sweat. A high salt level, along with other symptoms, points to a diagnosis of CF.

Genetic tests are also being used to diagnose CF especially in adults, or when results of sweat tests are inconclusive. DNA

from a cheek swab or blood sample is analyzed to look for mutations in the gene responsible for CF.

People with CF are vulnerable to germs that usually have no ill effect on healthy people. Some of these germs can cause serious infections for people with CF and are difficult to treat with antibiotics, so it is important to prevent germs from spreading.

There are precautions people can take to help prevent the spread of germs within the CF population. General good hygiene is an important factor -- wash your hands thoroughly and often, sneeze into your arm, maintain a distance of three feet from people with CF and avoid sharing utensils, drinks, toothbrushes or exercise equipment.

Doctors Nova Scotia encourages all Nova Scotians to become aware of the ways each of us can help the cystic fibrosis community. For more information of cystic fibrosis, visit www.cysticfibrosis.ca.

Ross Leighton, BSc, MD, FRCSC, FACS,
President, Doctors Nova Scotia

An annual *Silver Dart* winter festival proposed

by Jim Morrow

A niche market has been identified and a feasibility study has been written on aviation tourism in Nova Scotia.

Twelve airports and the province are collaborating to make Nova Scotia a "fly in" destination.

The study states that "it would be worthwhile to invest some time and some funds in a few key marketing activities for a three year period, with careful tracking of the results to determine the impacts and revenue generated."

"This serves Baddeck well," believes Nahman Korem of Crown Jewel Resort in Big Baddeck. "Not only would Baddeck be a centre of aviation history but it could become a prominent aviation experiential destination."

Mr. Korem hopes to create an increase in traffic to his air strip and to the Village of Baddeck because of a multi-faceted approach to bringing aviators to a spectacular destination.

He believes he can garner the support of government with the support of the community to establish an annual February festival of flight.

People came from all over the world to watch the replica of the *Silver Dart* fly in February 2009 and Mr. Korem believes aviation enthusiasts would be very excited to fly into Baddeck for a festival that featured aviation especially if replicas of the *Silver Dart* were built and flown during the festival.

"Replicas could be manufactured for flying during the festival and also be used as ambassadors for the Province and Baddeck

at international air shows," Mr. Korem suggests.

At the festival, multiple flights of newly built *Silver Dart* replicas could occur. These flights would be open to any pilot against a fee and a donation to the SDCA's Legacy project.

He also envisions the festival to include such things as daily air show flights (from the ice) by small airplanes; a fly-in for wheel and ski airplanes; the Skyhawks parachute show; sightseeing flights for the public (from the ice); snow/ice sculpturing (of airplanes) at the Bell museum; and a flight simulator at the Bell museum.

"Optional winter events and activities can tie into this festival," Mr. Korem believes. "Events such as snowmobiles rallies, hockey tournaments, horse drawn sleigh rides, cross-country skiing and other ice and winter activities," he suggests.

Mr. Korem said, "There will be a need for government support to start this event. However, I expect that within a few years the event can become financially sustainable. An acceptable business plan will be prepared after getting the support of the various stakeholders."

A festival of flight would require a commitment from local accommodations and food service operations (most of which are usually closed by November) to be open for the week around February 23rd the date the original *Silver Dart* flew in 1909, but Mr. Korem is confident the festival will grow and become one of the pieces that will make Baddeck and Cape Breton Island a year round destination.

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