

## **UC San Diego Researchers and Helpline Supporters Celebrate 15 Years of Helping Smokers Quit**

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430,000 people... or an average of 80 people per day. That's the number of people The California Smokers' Helpline has helped "kick the habit" in its 15 years of service.

The Helpline is a free, multi-lingual service operated out of the Moores Cancer Center at the University of California, San Diego. UCSD researchers joined the California Department of Public Health in a celebratory press conference today, August 23, 2007, in Los Angeles.

"From the beginning, we understood it was going to be a challenge to serve such a large and ethnically diverse state," Shu-Hong Zhu, Ph.D., Director, UCSD Tobacco Cessation Center, and

professor, Department of Family and Preventive Medicine, UCSD School of Medicine. “But over the last 15 years we have been able to successfully establish a ‘quit line’ in six different languages and have recruited and trained counselors to respond to callers in their language of choice.”

Zhu spoke at the conference along with Bonita Sorensen, Chief Deputy Director of Policy and Programs for the California Department of Public Health, and Sharon Cummins, Director of Research and Evaluation for the California Smokers’ Helpline.

### **The Numbers:**

The Helpline, established in 1992, is modeled after a pilot program operated by smoking cessation experts at The University of California, San Diego. This was the first statewide smoking cessation quit line in the nation.

- → Callers to the Helpline are from all age groups.
- → The majority, 51 percent of the callers are age 25 to 44. This is important because the younger we are able to reach a smoker and help them quit, the less likely they will develop future tobacco-related illnesses.
- → Two-thirds of callers have either no health insurance (24.2 percent) or use Medi-Cal (45.2 percent).
- → Nearly 70 percent of callers smoke 15 or more cigarettes per day, and are considered heavy smokers.

“The California Smokers’ Helpline is doing a good job at reaching pregnant women who smoke. Both Hispanic and African American smokers actively use the Smokers’ Helpline for help quitting. We are also pleased that calls from Asians and Pacific Islanders have increased over the years,” said Zhu. “However, we are not reaching English-speaking Asians. And, smokers who have young children are also a big concern for us. Nearly 19 percent of our callers have children under the age of five.”

### **Helpline Background:**

The California Smokers’ Helpline was established from research conducted at UCSD, which proved that:

- → Smokers who received telephone counseling are more likely to make a serious attempt to quit than those who relied on self-help materials.
- → Smokers who received multiple counseling sessions had a higher success rate than those who received only one.
- → The success rate for callers who received multiple counseling sessions was double of those who tried to quit on their own.

Based on the success of the California Smokers' Helpline, quit lines have also been established in every state in the U.S., all Canadian provinces, Puerto Rico, most European countries, Australia, New Zealand, Brazil and Taiwan. Many of these have used California as a model.

The Helpline offers self-help materials, referral to local resources, and telephone counseling, free of charge to anyone living in California. Helpline services are available in: English, Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese), Korean, Spanish and Vietnamese as well as a TDD line for the hard of hearing.

Counselors at the Helpline have a range of educational backgrounds from bachelor's degrees through master's degrees in psychology, social work, or other health related fields. Regardless of educational background and counseling experience, all counselors complete a 48-hour in-house training program and a one-month apprenticeship at the Helpline.

The Helpline is funded by tobacco taxes, through the California Department of Health Services and First 5 California.

### **Information:**

The California Smokers' Helpline is launching a new Click-to-Call service. Simply visit [www.NoButts.org](http://www.NoButts.org) or [www.TobaccoFreeCA.com](http://www.TobaccoFreeCA.com), type in your telephone number and a counselor will call you back at the selected time.

For more information, visit the Helpline's website at [www.nobutts.org](http://www.nobutts.org), call the Outreach Department at 858-300-1010 or send an email to [cshoutreach@ucsd.edu](mailto:cshoutreach@ucsd.edu).

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