

International Effort to Protect Children from Tobacco Launched at the 14th World Conference on Tobacco or Health Meeting in Mumbai

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the International Pediatric Association launched a multi-year international effort to protect children from exposure to tobacco and second-hand smoke at the World Conference on Tobacco OR Health (WHTOH), which was held in Mumbai in March, 2009. The new Global Tobacco Prevention program, which is supported by the AAP Julius B. Richmond Center of Excellence, will work to raise awareness and promote involvement of child health clinicians worldwide to protect children and families from the harmful health effects of tobacco exposure.

The dangers of tobacco to children globally are considerable: active cigarette smoking during childhood and adolescence can produce significant health problems among young people, including periodontal disease, chronic coughing, increased phlegm production, an increase in the number and severity of respiratory illnesses, decreased physical fitness, and potential retardation in the rate of lung growth and the level of maximum lung function. The World Health Organization (WHO) Global Youth Tobacco Survey found that nearly fifty percent of non-smokers are also exposed to second-hand smoke. Exposed children and infants are at increased risk for multiple serious health conditions, such as asthma, respiratory infections, decreased lung growth and exercise tolerance, and sudden infant death syndrome. Additionally, children may be harmed through malnutrition as parents in poor household spend money on tobacco rather than on adequate food supplies.

The AAP, a member of the International Pediatric Association (IPA), joined the WHO on May 31st 2008 – World No Tobacco Day - in calling for Tobacco-Free Youth. In a Letter from the President in the AAP News Renée R. Jenkins, MD, FAAP recommended calling on the movie industry to stop toxic tobacco content in films and to make youth-rated movies smoke-free. She also endorsed the revised 2008 updated U.S. Public Health Service Guideline Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence, which strengthens recommendation for tobacco cessation counseling in pediatric care and supports pediatric interventions to prevent exposure to second-hand smoke. WHO published Policy recommendations on protection from exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke in 2007 and the WHO's 2008 MPOWER Report on the global tobacco epidemic is now available in six languages on the internet at http://www.who.int/tobacco/research/secondhand_smoke/en/. MPOWER recommends six policies to reverse the tobacco epidemic: MONITOR tobacco use and prevention policies, PROTECT people from tobacco smoke, OFFER help to quit tobacco use, WARN about the dangers of tobacco, ENFORCE bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship, and RAISE taxes on tobacco.

The AAP received a grant from the Flight Attendant Medical Research Institute in 2006 to establish the AAP Julius B. Richmond Center of Excellence, which works to improve child health by eliminating children's exposure to tobacco and second-hand smoke (<http://www.aap.org/RichmondCenter/>). Led by Jonathan Klein, MD,

MPH, members of the Richmond Center have collaborated with the AAP Tobacco Consortium in America over the past three years to create a healthy environment for children and their families through public education and the promotion of public health policies to eliminate tobacco. They also work to educate child health clinicians about the consequences of childhood tobacco exposure and to provide clinicians with the skills and tools needed to help parents, families and communities to protect children. The Center has also joined forces with the IPA, and more recently with the Johns Hopkins Center for International Tobacco Control, on a global initiative to develop self-study curriculum modules for clinicians worldwide to protect children from the harmful effects of tobacco. The curriculum will be available online in the six official United Nations languages by the end of the year.

The IPA is based in Geneva, Switzerland and partners worldwide with the private sector, non-governmental organizations and international child health organizations such as the World Health Organization, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Bank. Harry Lando, PhD, Vice President of the WCTOH, founding member of the AAP Tobacco Consortium and a member of the Richmond Center Advisory Committee, collaborated with the IPA and AAP to launch the new program to train child health care clinicians in India in collaboration with the Indian Academy of Pediatrics.

The Global Tobacco Prevention program is co-directed by Dr. Klein, Swati Bhave, MD (IPA, Adolescent Health Technical Advisor) and Ruth Etzel, PhD (IPA, Children's Environmental Health Technical Advisor). Planning is underway to expand the collaboration to national pediatric societies in China, Brazil, and other countries identified by the World Health Organization as those countries whose children and youth are most adversely impacted by tobacco. The AAP Richmond Center welcomes groups from these countries to work with the IPA and AAP on national and regional tobacco control programs to improve child health. To learn more or discuss collaborative options, please contact Dr. Klein at RichmondCenter@aap.org or call (585) 275-7760.