

SAMA supports World No Tobacco Day

The South African Medical Association (SAMA) supports World No Tobacco Day on 31 May. The World Health Organisation's (WHO) theme for World No Tobacco Day 2008 is "Tobacco-free youth" - as almost half of the world's children breathe air polluted by tobacco smoke.

The WHO created World No Tobacco Day in 1987 to draw global attention to the tobacco epidemic and its lethal effects.

The use of tobacco is currently responsible for 10% of adult deaths globally with more than one billion smokers in the world. Tobacco use kills 5.4 million people a year - an average of one person every six seconds - and accounts for one in 10 adult deaths worldwide. It is the only legal consumer product that kills one third to one half of those who use it as intended by its manufacturers, with its victims dying on average 15 years prematurely.

Second-hand tobacco smoke is dangerous to health as it also causes cancer, heart disease and many other serious diseases. At least 200 000 workers die each year due to exposure to second-hand smoke.

The Minister of Health, Dr Manto Tshabalala-Msimang has welcomed the new report on global tobacco control efforts released by the WHO on the 7 February 2008. It indicates that consumption of cigarettes in South Africa has "declined dramatically" because of higher taxes.

SAMA agrees with the implementation of tobacco control measures taken by the South African Government to curb high healthcare costs whilst protecting the health of our population by reducing smoking rates.

The WHO report stated that South Africa scored very high compliance rates to enforce the tobacco control measures as recommended by the WHO, which includes:

- 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
- Raise taxes on tobacco

SAMA supports all efforts to ensure a healthier nation and a healthy environment for all.