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Lowering smoking rates in the Chinese community

Men in the Chinese community are at increased risk of tobacco related illness due to their relatively higher smoking rates, with one in five China-born men in NSW smokers (20.3%).

This is especially so for male Chinese restaurant workers across Sydney, with a 2012 survey finding that a third of them are daily smokers.¹ This rate is almost double that of the smoking rate in the general population.

To address the issue, the Chinese Australian Tobacco and Health Network (CATHN) was awarded an Evidence to Practice Grant by the Cancer Institute NSW to provide tobacco cessation for Chinese restaurant workers.

Myna Hua, Manager, Health Promotion Service, South Eastern Sydney Local Health District, said that while this is a pilot project, Chinese restaurant workers who start the quit journey, or who have quit successfully, have started to enjoy better health and big savings.

“This has contributed to lowering the smoking rate in this community,” Ms Hua said.

In 2014, CATHN set up smoking cessation support groups across Haymarket, Hurstville and Chatswood for a period of 12 weeks. It involved face-to-face visits by CATHN representatives and the provision of 12 weeks free nicotine replacement therapy and telephone support by the Chinese Quitline.

In Hurstville, workers from the Sunny Harbour Seafood Restaurant participated in one of the three support groups. Among the 10 workers, five of them have quit or reduced their smoking. At the end of 12 weeks, the project team celebrated with the restaurant workers on their quit successes and a certificate of appreciation was awarded to the management for their support.

Tim Yu, Manager of Sunny Harbour Seafood Restaurant said he had worked in the restaurant for more than 10 years and smoking rates among staff were high.

“By supporting them to quit, it has not only benefited our workers and their families’ health, it has made the restaurant a healthier workplace and it is more enjoyable,” Mr Yu said.

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Katarzyna Bochynska, Program Manager, Tobacco Control at the Cancer Institute NSW, said research shows that quit smoking interventions in the workplace help smokers successfully quit.²

“Having the support of co-workers and managers at the Restaurant has provided motivation and encouragement for the workers to begin and continue their quit journey,” Ms Bochynska said.

“The best thing a smoker can do for their health is quit smoking. The chances are a smoker is damaging their body, even if they can’t feel it yet. By quitting smoking, a person can improve their health, and the health of their family – which benefits the whole community.

“The Cancer Institute NSW congratulates the Sunny Harbour Seafood staff and managers for their involvement in this project.”

Members in the Chinese community who are contemplating quitting smoking can contact the Chinese Quitline on 1300 7848 36.

References:

1. Chinese Australian Tobacco and Health Network (CATHN*), survey of over 360 Chinese restaurant workers in Haymarket, Hurstville, Chatswood and Parramatta)
2. Cahill K, Moher M and Lancaster T. Workplace interventions for smoking cessation. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2008;8(4):CD003440. Available from:
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