



## Press Release

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### £1 MILLION A DAY SMOKING BILL FOR THE NHS IN WALES

New figures out today show that the burden of smoking is costing the NHS in Wales over £7 million every week.

A new report commissioned by ASH Wales and British Heart Foundation Cymru, being presented at an international tobacco control conference in Cardiff today by Professor Ceri J Phillips of Swansea University, reveals that:-

- Smoking related diseases cost NHS Wales an estimated £386 million in 2007/08
- Smoking accounts for an estimated 22% of adult hospital admission costs, over £235 million every year
- Over £43 million is spent on GP consultations

Nearly a quarter of the adult population in Wales are smokers and most of these started smoking as children. Every year 6000 people die in Wales as a result of smoking. Many more people in Wales will continue to die each year, or suffer chronic long term illnesses, if these levels are sustained.

The £386 million annual smoking bill currently incurred by the NHS in Wales would pay for the cost of the Children's Hospital for Wales six-fold or cover the total cost of swine flu vaccinations currently ordered for the whole of the UK with money left over.

**Tanya Buchanan**, CEO of ASH Wales said:

*"These figures demonstrate the huge costs of smoking to the NHS in Wales. However, what this report doesn't include is the huge cost to the economy of Wales, for example more than £23m from lost productivity through smoking related sickness absences and £6 million from smoking related fires. Not to mention the emotional cost of family members seeing their loved ones suffer daily from smoking related illnesses. In Wales we need to move our focus towards a more proactive health service, promoting and protecting people's health throughout their lives.*

*Smoking places a substantial economic and social burden on the NHS in Wales. It is evident that the existing pattern of services cannot last.*

*This report should not be used to demonise smokers. Smoking is an addiction of childhood, not an adult choice and we need to do more to protect children and young people from the harm caused by tobacco and also assist adults to quit. We now have a great opportunity to*

*protect future generations from this lethal addiction and we urge the Welsh Assembly Government to act now and implement a comprehensive, and fully funded, tobacco control strategy for Wales, in line with other parts of the UK.”*

**Delyth Lloyd**, Public Affairs Manager for British Heart Foundation Cymru said:

*“The findings of this report should be of real concern to all who are involved in public health policy and decision making in Wales. Smoking is a leading risk factor for heart disease and as we can see from this report is placing a huge financial burden on our NHS. It is vitally important that the Welsh Assembly Government takes note of these figures and implement a tobacco control strategy for Wales as a result of this astonishing cost. Smoking is an addiction of childhood. A child born today who never smokes will live, on average, ten years longer than a child who takes up smoking. The younger a smoker starts, the harder it is for them to quit therefore it is vital that we prevent young people from starting to smoke in the first instance and ensure that the very best support, advice and treatment is available to those who want to quit.”*

#### **Key Facts**

- Every year in Wales 6000 smokers die as a result of smoking.<sup>1</sup>
- 24% of the adult population in Wales are smokers<sup>2</sup> and almost all of them started to smoke as children.
- Wales has the highest rates of chronic illness in the UK.<sup>3</sup>
- Lung cancer is Wales' biggest cancer killer, with more than 1,500 deaths due to lung cancer.<sup>4</sup>
- Smoking is an addiction of childhood not an adult choice.
- Amongst Welsh 15 year olds, 23% of girls and 12% of boys report regular smoking in 2006<sup>5</sup> compared to Western Australia where less than 5% of 12 to 17 year old West Australians now smoke regularly.<sup>6</sup>
- Employment and the estimated cost of absenteeism caused by smoking in Wales (2003 prices) was £23. 28 million whilst cost of fire damage attributable to smoking in Wales (2003 prices) was £5.95 million.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Summary of Report Findings**

- Smoking cost NHS Wales an estimated £386 million in 2007/08; equivalent to £129 per head and 7% of total healthcare expenditure in Wales.
- Secondary care accounts for 67% of the total cost and primary care 33%.
- £235.6 million is spent on hospital admissions and £21.5 million on outpatient attendances, while £43.1 million is spent on GP consultations, £6.2 million on practice nurse consultations and £79.3 million on prescriptions.
- Smoking accounts overall for an estimated 22% of adult hospital admission costs, 6% of outpatient costs, 13% of GP consultation costs, 12% of practice nurse consultation costs and 14% of prescription costs.

## **ENDS**

Please refer all press enquiries to: Carole Jones, ASH Wales at [carole@ashwales.co.uk](mailto:carole@ashwales.co.uk) or Tel 02920641101 or 07593538076

<sup>1</sup> Chief Medical Officer for Wales Annual Report 2006 accessed at

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/dphhp/publication/cmo/reports/report2006/report.pdf?lang=en>

<sup>2</sup> *Smoking in Wales: Current Facts* Published by Wales Centre for Health Nov 2007 accessed at

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sites3/Documents/568/WCH%20smoking%20ban%20report%20E%20final.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> *Improving Health and the Management of Chronic Conditions in Wales: An Integrated Model and Framework for Action* accessed at

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/dhss/publications/health/strategies/chronicconditions/chronicconditionse.pdf?lang=en>

<sup>4</sup> *Cancer in Wales, 1992-2006: A Comprehensive Report*. Welsh Cancer Intelligence and Surveillance Unit, September 2008. accessed at

[http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sites3/Documents/242/WCISUTriennialReport2008\\_English.pdf](http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sites3/Documents/242/WCISUTriennialReport2008_English.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> *Inequalities in Young People's health*. HBSC international report from the 2005/2006 survey Risk Behaviour. Tobacco use, cannabis use, sexual behaviour, fighting, bullying.

<sup>6</sup> Australian School Students Alcohol and Drug survey, 2008

<sup>7</sup> Cohen, D and Lisle, C. (2005) Modeling the Impact of a Ban on Smoking in Public Places in Wales (unpublished)<sup>7</sup>