



The Royal Australian  
College of General  
Practitioners

# Media release

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## GPs well equipped to support patients fulfil New Year's resolutions to butt out

General practitioners (GPs) and other health professionals are now even better equipped with a practical, succinct and evidence-based guide to help patients fulfil New Year's resolutions to quit smoking, thanks to an updated smoking cessation resource launched by The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) today.

Professor Nicholas Zwar, Chair of the RACGP content advisory group and RACGP spokesperson, said smoking still remained the behavioural risk factor responsible for the highest levels of preventable and premature death, despite smoking rates continuing to fall in Australia.

"While smoking rates have steadily declined in Australia, we have not won the battle yet. Smoking remains the risk factor with the highest levels of disease – such as lung and other cancers, coronary heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and asthma.

"Such is the lethal magnitude of smoking that we only have to stop two potential lifelong smokers to save a life. There is no other intervention for a common problem that is so effective, he said.

The updated guide, [\*Supporting smoking cessation: a guide for health professionals 2011\*](#), incorporates a number of significant new developments in both the science and practice of cessation support providing health professionals with a valuable resource to help patients keen to stop smoking.

"There is good evidence to suggest that smokers are more likely to successfully quit with the help of their GP or other health professionals, including practice nurses.

"We know that spending just a few minutes talking to patients about quitting smoking can lead to behavioural change. People keen to kick the habit of smoking in 2012, should make it a priority to speak to their GP about the latest research and medications available to them – a step that may result in increasing life expectancy up to 10 years.

"GPs can assist patients wanting to quit by helping them to set a quit date, identifying situations and behaviours that encourage the patient to smoke and advising on managing these impulses.

"Thanks to new research outlined in the guide, GPs and other health professionals now have a greater understanding of the nervous system and nicotine addiction; prescription medications used to treat smoking addiction; and approved use of nicotine replacement therapy," Professor Zwar said.

The guide highlights how individuals seeking to quit can improve their success rate through a combination of clinical advice and use of appropriate medications. Withdrawal symptoms related to nicotine addiction can often prove a key barrier in an attempt to quit smoking. Today, a number of options exist to reduce these symptoms in the form of nicotine replacement therapy and prescription medicines.

"While nicotine replacement therapy medications are easily accessible to purchase over-the-counter, people often benefit from advice and support from a health professional in their quit attempt, including choosing the most suitable medicine," Professor Zwar said.

"Individuals thinking of quitting can be reassured GPs are well equipped with the latest evidence-based research and best practice examples to provide a tailored approach to quitting for every patient."

In addition to today's release of the updated RACGP smoking cessation resource, in 2012, GPs will have the opportunity to participate in an online learning module to further support their understanding of new information and best practice outlined within the guide.

The *Supporting smoking cessation: a guide for health professionals 2011* is now available on the RACGP website at [www.racgp.org.au/guidelines/smokingcessation](http://www.racgp.org.au/guidelines/smokingcessation).

– ends

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#### **About the RACGP**

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) is Australia's largest professional general practice organisation and represents urban and rural general practitioners. We represent over 20,000 members working in or towards a career in general practice and are proud that over 18,000 general practitioners in Australia have chosen to be a member of the College. There are over 125 million general practice consultations taking place annually in Australia. Visit [www.racgp.org.au](http://www.racgp.org.au).