June 7, 2013

Dear Colleague,

Last month I attended the launch of the second Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Tips from Former Smokers national tobacco education campaign. It promotes awareness of the suffering caused by smoking and secondhand smoke exposure and encourages smokers to quit. Along with CDC director, Dr. Tom Frieden and Surgeon General, Dr. Regina Benjamin, national leaders from the American Academy of Family Physicians, American Medical Association, American Academy of Pediatrics), American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and American College of Physicians participated in the launch.

I am reaching out to you to ask that you use your influence as a health care provider to help your patients quit smoking. As health care providers, we know smoking has a negative impact on our patients’ health. The leading cause of preventable death and disease, smoking kills more than 1,200 Americans each day. In Connecticut, over 13 adults die each day due to their own smoking, and hundreds more die each year due to secondhand smoke. For every person who dies from tobacco use, another 20 suffer from one or more serious smoking-related illnesses including cancer of the lungs, stomach, mouth, esophagus, pancreas, and kidneys; heart disease; and bronchitis, emphysema, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Reducing smoking is one proven way we can help people live longer, healthier lives. Because over 70% of tobacco users visit a health care provider each year, as a provider, you have a unique opportunity to motivate your patients to quit and improve the chances that they will be successful.

This Tips campaign includes a new initiative referred to as “Talk with Your Doctor.” This initiative is a first step towards engaging the clinician community more in the campaign and will provide a great opportunity for you to ask your patients about their tobacco use and encourage them to make a quit attempt. For these reasons, we at the Connecticut Department of Public Health are inviting you to join. We can work together to raise awareness about the dangers of tobacco use and to motivate smokers to quit.

Materials available to assist you include waiting room posters downloadable at www.cdc.gov/tips and a looped video for use in office waiting rooms from www.plowsharegroup.com/cdctips. A statewide media marketing campaign will complement these materials to build increased awareness about the dangers of smoking. During the last year’s campaign, overall Quitline call volume more than doubled, and visitors to the website were more
than five times the levels measured during the same 12-week period in 2011. More information and free resources are available through the DPH Tobacco program at (860) 509-8251.

You know the devastation that tobacco brings to your patients, and you know tobacco use drastically increases the health care burden from chronic diseases. Please join me in combating the burden.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Jewel Mullen, MD, MPH, MPA, FACP
Commissioner