May 23, 2013

Dear Colleague:

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death and disease, killing nearly 9,700 Hoosiers each year. For every person who dies from tobacco use, another 20 are suffering from one or more serious smoking-related illnesses. Reducing smoking is one proven way we can help people live healthier lives and is a 2013 strategic priority of the Indiana State Department of Health. Not smoking while pregnant is also critical for reducing Indiana’s high infant mortality rate, also a priority of ISDH.

This spring, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) launched the second *Tips From Former Smokers* national tobacco education campaign (*Tips 2013*) to raise awareness about the suffering caused by smoking and secondhand smoke exposure, and to encourage smokers to quit. As a health care provider, you know smoking has a negative impact on your patient’s health.

Next week, the media campaign will highlight a “Talk With Your Doctor” effort by including the tagline: “You Can Quit. Talk with Your Doctor for Help.” This will provide a great opportunity for you to ask your patients about their tobacco use and encourage them to make a quit attempt. You are one of the most important sources of health information for your patients and their families. Tobacco users are more likely to make a quit attempt if advised by their doctor.

For these reasons, ISDH is partnering with the Indiana Academy of Family Physicians (IAFP), the Indiana State Medical Association (ISMA), and the Indiana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (INAAP) and other health professions to raise awareness about the dangers of tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke, and to motivate smokers to quit. To maximize this opportunity, I am reaching out to ask that you use your influence as a health care provider to help your patients quit smoking.

Your patients look to you for direction about their individual health issues. With your help and guidance, you can give them the power to curb this devastating problem. We know your time is limited; therefore we have provided links to information that will assist you to make the referral process quick and easy. These materials are designed to provide you with evidence-based recommendations and tools for smoking cessation treatment that increase the likelihood of a successful quit attempt.

- Talk with your patients about quitting with these helpful tools.
- Enroll as a Preferred Provider of the Quit Now Indiana Preferred Network which will give you access to proven, professional resources to help patients conquer their addiction to tobacco.
- Refer tobacco users to the free phone-based professional counseling service, Indiana Tobacco Quitline (1-800-QUIT-NOW) for a variety of tobacco cessation services, including one-on-one telephone coaching and unlimited access to web coaching, which is an interactive web-based tool with discussion forums and stage-based quit guides. [www.quitnowindiana.com](http://www.quitnowindiana.com).

You see the devastation that tobacco brings to your patients every day. You know tobacco use drastically increases the health care burden from chronic diseases. Let’s join together in combating the burden and reducing tobacco use among Hoosiers.

Sincerely,

William C. Van Ness II, MD
STATE HEALTH COMMISSIONER