

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Thursday, July 9, 2015

Researchers quantify weight gain for smokers who quit

Fear of weight gain is a commonly cited reason for not quitting smoking, despite evidence that quitting will result in better overall health.

Researchers at the University of Tasmania's Menzies Institute for Medical Research have now been able to quantify the weight gain for smokers who quit, and the difference in weight gain between quitters and continuing smokers.

Mrs Jing Tian (first author) and Dr Seana Gall (senior author), from the Public Health and Primary Care research theme at Menzies, analysed data from 63,403 quitters and 388,432 continuing smokers and found that people who quit smoking gained an average of 4.1 kg weight over about five years, which is 2.6 kg greater than the gain in continuing smokers.

They found the amount of difference in weight gain is greater in women than men, and in studies conducted in North America than in Asia.

"We don't want our findings interpreted as an incentive to keep smoking," Dr Gall, a cardiovascular epidemiologist, said. "Other studies suggest that this small amount of weight gain does not offset the many health benefits of quitting smoking."

"The reasons for the weight gain after smoking are complex but probably related to changes in brain activity and metabolism after quitting."

The Director of Quit Tasmania, Abby Smith, said the main message is that people should not put off quitting smoking for fear of unwanted weight gain. "Smoking causes cancer. The best approach to tackle weight gain is by being active and eating a healthy diet," Ms Smith said.

"For advice and support, consider seeing a health professional or contact Quitline on 13 QUIT (13 7848)."

Cigarette smoking is a considerable risk to public health, being responsible for nearly six million deaths worldwide every year. About two in every three smokers in Australia will die prematurely from a tobacco-related disease.

The study, using a systematic review and meta-analysis, was recently published in the journal *Obesity Reviews*.

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/obr.12304/pdf>

Information released by:

Miranda Harman
Marketing and Communications Manager
Menzies Institute for Medical Research
University of Tasmania
Phone: 61 3 6226-7751
61 427 199 562
Email: miranda.harman@utas.edu.au