

## New UNC study: Statewide teen tobacco use media campaign shows initial success

CHAPEL HILL -- Statewide efforts to persuade children and adolescents not to use tobacco will receive a strong boost this week as University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill researchers release results of the first in-depth study of a statewide anti-smoking media campaign. Funded by the North Carolina Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF), the television campaign focusing on the serious health consequences of tobacco use, took place between April and October of 2004. The evaluation of North Carolina's campaign will be presented at the 2005 National Conference on Tobacco that starts Wednesday in Chicago.

Evaluation of the 2004 TRU (Tobacco Reality Unfiltered) television campaign by UNC's Tobacco Prevention and Evaluation Program showed that the campaign reached 45% of all youth in the state between the ages 11 and 17. This number represented almost 360,000 young people across the state. The data revealed significant results in solidifying resolve among nonsmokers to remain that way. The pre-campaign survey identified youth who were not susceptible to smoking. The post-campaign survey revealed that among this group, those youth who saw the TRU advertisements were significantly more likely to remain nonsmokers than were those who had not seen the advertisements. "Virtually all the experimentation in smoking that occurred in non-susceptible, non-smoking youth at baseline occurred among those unaware of the campaign" said Dr. Adam Goldstein, Associate Professor of Family Medicine at the UNC School of Medicine and Director of its Tobacco Prevention and Evaluation Program. "This translates into approximately 9000 fewer youth experimenting with tobacco than might have occurred without having seen this campaign. Ultimately, this would translate into almost \$4 million of cost savings in preventing future tobacco-related diseases among North Carolina citizens."

Researchers from UNC's tobacco evaluation program released findings from their study of the 2004 HWTF media campaign at a Raleigh news briefing today. HWTF, established in 2001, to allocate 25% of the Master Tobacco Settlement, sponsored the media campaign as part of its statewide teen tobacco prevention and cessation initiative to reduce tobacco use among North Carolina adolescents. HWTF also pays for UNC's ongoing study of the campaign's effectiveness. "It is exciting that we appear to be seeing an early and positive effect of the campaign", said Dr. George Gamble, Associate Director of the tobacco evaluation program, "and that's good news on many fronts since smoking continues to be the leading cause of premature death and unnecessary suffering among people in North Carolina and the United States."

The UNC study involved random-sample surveying of more than 600 N.C. youth via telephone, before and after the television campaign, along with 14 statewide focus groups of diverse youth about the campaign advertisements. The findings showed:

- A greater percentage of youth in the Charlotte media market -- 53 percent reported awareness of the campaign than youth in other N.C. media markets. That difference is significant because, as a test for future expansion of the campaign, more anti-smoking announcements aired in the Charlotte area.
- Almost 55 percent of non-white youths, compared with 40.5 percent of white youths, recalled the messages. Awareness of the TRU campaign, slogans and brand among NC youth increased substantially over the last two years. TRU is now recognized by an estimated 439,000 NC youth 11 to 17 years of age. Analysis of the focus group responses revealed that the most effective ad in the campaign was called *Travelogue*, and its effectiveness was traced to its graphic and emotional depiction of the serious health consequences of smoking. This ad showed North Carolinians sharing their own experiences with tobacco use and represented a diverse cross section of youth.

"The focus groups show that the campaign is scientifically sound, and in the future it should produce even more focused and effective campaigns to prevent youth tobacco use," Goldstein said. "Given North Carolina's high rates of youth smoking, it is essential that the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund expand its mass media campaign in 2005 so that statewide exposure can reach the level that Charlotte received in 2004. By applying lessons learned, an expanded campaign stands an excellent chance of reducing youth tobacco consumption significantly in the coming years."

Contact: Adam Goldstein, (919) 966-4090 or [adam\\_goldstein@med.unc.edu](mailto:adam_goldstein@med.unc.edu)

News Services contact: David Williamson, (919) 962-8596