MEDIA ADVISORY

GREAT AMERICAN SMOKEOUT STORY IDEA:

GROUP ATTEMPTS TO QUIT ON MONDAY, NOV. 6

What:
Although the Great American Smokeout is scheduled for Thursday, Nov. 16, a group of 20 nervous San Diegans will stop smoking Nov. 6 on "Quit Day" of their stop smoking program at Scripps Clinic. These same 20 people will meet again 48 hours later when they are into their withdrawal. This is a behavioral modification class that began Oct. 25, with participants meeting twice a week.

When:
The Quit Day class will be held 6-8:30 p.m. Monday, Nov. 6.
The class meets again 48 hours later 6-8:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 8. At that session, they will be well into their withdrawal symptoms such as irritability, sleeplessness, loss of memory or concentration, depression, headache.

Where:
Scripps Clinic & Research Foundation's Health Resource Center, 10820 N. Torrey Pines Rd., in the Shiley Sports & Health Center of Scripps Clinic.

R.S.V.P.: Sue Pondrom, 554-8133

Interviews: Many class members will be available for interviews about how they are doing -- their concerns, fears, and their resolve to make it work this time. In addition, the class instructors can discuss methods for stopping smoking. (See background information below)

Background: The American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout, an annual event to encourage Americans to stop smoking, is scheduled for Thursday, Nov. 16th.

Scripps Clinic has a nine-year-old program for the public called Smoke No More, which has a success rate of 50-51%. (The average national success rate is 30%).
Participants meet twice weekly for four weeks, then they reconvene once a month for three months to discuss each member's successes, problems, and new coping strategies.

Important note: This program does not use medication or negative aversion therapy. Rather, the focus is behavioral. Program director Betty Christensen believes aversion therapy and/or medication can be a crutch or "magic wand" for the smoker. Her experience has been that people don't put out the same effort to stop if they feel they have one of these magic wands to see them through the ordeal.

"These people feel real guilty," Christensen notes. "Society is coming down on them. They feel like isolated, third rate citizens. And, they resent the fact that alcoholics are treated like they have a disease, when smokers are just seen as being stupid. Our program recognizes that nicotine is addictive, and that it's okay for the smoker to feel angry and irritable when they try to stop."

She notes that the program also gives coping skills to help the smoker along. For example, at the first meeting, each participant is given a list of cigarettes and the amount of nicotine in each. "We have them decrease their nicotine intake gradually," Christensen says. "Most start out with cigarettes that have an average 1.4 milligrams of nicotine. By quit day two weeks later, we want them to have gradually changed brands down to cigarettes with .05 milligrams nicotine."

The participants are also told to wrap their cigarettes in cellophane, so that the act of having a cigarette becomes a more conscience decision to smoke. "By the second meeting, many people have cut back by one third to one half just by an increased awareness of when they automatically reach for a cigarette," Christensen says.

She notes that complete nicotine withdrawal takes 72 hours. By the Nov. 13 class, the participants are now ready to tackle such issues as the psychological reasons they smoked. They also learn relaxation techniques and diet tips.

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