



A Message from the President

February 7, 2005

To: All Employees, Volunteers, and Students at Upstate

A Smoke-Free Upstate Medical University

Dear Colleague:

I wrote to you in March and July 2004 expressing my concern about the health issues created by smoking and exposure to second hand smoke. I said that my goal is to have a completely smoke free environment at Upstate beginning August 1, 2005. Now I would like to bring you up to date on some of the work that has been done to help achieve that goal.

The Advisory Committee for a Smoke-Free Upstate, chaired by Dr. K. Bruce Simmons, Medical Director of Employee/Student Health, has been busy and productive. Committee members have communicated with individuals at other academic medical centers that already have achieved an entirely smoke-free environment to review some of the successful programs they offer. Some institutions that have shared information with us include St. Mary's Mercy Medical Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan (all three hospitals in Grand Rapids have smoke-free campuses), the University of Michigan Health System, and the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.

The committee has launched a new website, www.upstate.edu/events/smokefree, that provides employees and the general public with information on the smoke-free initiative. I encourage you to visit it. A new "Lets Clear the Air" slogan and logo also have been developed.

Support for smokers at Upstate, in the form of information about nicotine replacement therapy and smoking cessation group sessions, will be offered without charge. Referral for individual therapy also can be arranged. Information and sign-ups for this program will appear soon, with the smoking cessation sessions and nicotine replacement therapy beginning in February. Members of the Upstate community may register for smoking cessation classes by calling Health Connections at 464-8668. Nicotine replacement therapy (patches and gum) will be distributed through the Employee/Student Health Office on the 4th floor of Jacobsen Hall.

I think you will be interested to know that our goal of a completely smoke-free environment at Upstate is supported by local agencies, such as the American Lung Association, American Cancer Society, Onondaga County Health Department, and Tobacco-Free Onondaga County. Also, our own CSEA Local 615 has shown its leadership on this issue by signing a memorandum of understanding. Discussions with our other unions are ongoing.

As August 1 approaches, you will see additional activity, including new signs announcing the intent to go smoke-free, informational sessions for staff, staff training for instruction on how to interact with visitors who desire to smoke, invited speakers to share with us the experiences of other medical centers that have gone smoke-free, and wider community involvement.

As I have mentioned before, the goal of a smoke-free campus fits squarely within the mission of SUNY Upstate, which is dedicated to preventing disease and improving health. I am counting on your help and support to achieve this goal.

Sincerely,

Gregory L. Eastwood, MD
President