

## Smoking at Upstate Medical University

March 22, 2004

Dear Colleague:

*Tobacco surely was designed/To poison and destroy mankind.*  
(Philip Freneau, 1752-1832)

A recent flurry of communications has brought the issue of smoking at Upstate back on the front burner. Central to the debate is this: Should an institution that is dedicated to improving health condone or support in any way the furtherance of a self destructive and potentially lethal practice?

Smoking is a leading cause of heart disease, lung disease, cancer, and a host of other disorders. The cessation of smoking markedly improves health and the prospects for longer life.

Also, exposure to second-hand smoke is a risk for non-smokers. This university is responsible for providing a safe environment for its employees, patients, students, volunteers and visitors.

I discussed this matter with my Executive Council and we agreed that a proactive approach to smoking cessation is consistent with our health care mission. Here is what we will do:

- \* We will ensure that everyone is reminded of the existing smoking policy and our continued responsibility to enforce and abide by this policy. Supervisors and other leaders are responsible for the people under their direction to uphold the smoking policy.
- \* We will work with our union leaders to discuss policies and initiatives that will respect the rights of everyone to a healthy environment.
- \* We will explore opportunities to support employees, students, and volunteers who want to quit smoking.

Our goal is to work together to achieve a healthier environment for the well being of everyone. I will keep you informed of our progress and encourage you to support your colleagues if they desire assistance with smoking cessation. Information regarding smoking cessation options is available through our Employee/Student Health Office (464-4260) as well as through the New York State Quit-Smoking Quitline at 1-888-609-6292. Information also is available online at the New York State Smokers Quitsite at [www.nysmokefree.com](http://www.nysmokefree.com).

Thank you for your support as we address this difficult but important health issue.

Sincerely,

Gregory L. Eastwood, MD  
President