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For Immediate Release

TEEN SMOKING BEHAVIORS INFLUENCED SIGNIFICANTLY BY ADULTS

Two Studies Find that Modifying Adult Behaviors Could Help Curb Youth Smoking

CHICAGO, IL (May 1, 2003) – Teen smoking behaviors are significantly influenced by those of adults, according to the results of two new studies released today. One study focused on the relationship between youth and adult cigarette smoking rates and found that adolescent smoking prevalence was significantly and positively related to adult smoking prevalence. The other study examined the effect of parental influences on teen smoking behaviors and found that parental actions, communication, and rules play a significant role in youth smoking decisions.

Both studies were released by ImpacTeen, a policy research program based at the University of Illinois at Chicago and funded by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The reports are available online at www.impacteen.org/imp_respap.htm.

“While we’ve known for some time that a relationship exists between parental and adolescent smoking, we’re now beginning to add more details to what we know,” said Dr. Frank Chaloupka, director of ImpacTeen. “These studies tell us that policymakers trying to curb youth smoking should enlist the help of adults, especially parents. Teens who smoke aren’t rebelling against their parents or other adults; they’re emulating them.”

The study, *Exploring the Relationship Between Cigarette Smoking Among Adolescents and Adults in the United States*, was conducted using state-specific adolescent and adult smoking estimates from three national surveillance systems for the years 1997, 1999, or 2000. The researchers found a significant positive correlation between adult and adolescent smoking rates. In addition, the positive relationship persisted even when researchers controlled for cigarette prices and the strength of smoke-free air laws. The surveillance systems used to provide data included the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, and the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse. Lead authors of the study are Cindy Tworek, MPH, MS and Dr. Gary A. Giovino of the Roswell Park Cancer Institute.

The second study, *Parental Influences, Public Policy, and Youth Smoking Behavior*, was conducted using data drawn from the Audits and Surveys 1996 survey of high school

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students across the United States (*Study of Smoking and Tobacco Use Among Young People*). Researchers found that parental influences play a significant role in youth smoking in general, with the strongest correlations found between younger teens and their parents, white teens and their parents, and female teens and their parents. Further, the study found that changes in the home environment such as implementing home smoking rules and improving communication channels in the home are likely to be particularly effective in changing the smoking behaviors of young teens. Specific findings include:

- Youth aged 13-14 who live in homes where no one is allowed to smoke are 11% less likely to smoke than their peers in homes where anyone is allowed to smoke - among all teens the rate is reduced 5%.
- Daily discussion between adults and kids significantly reduces smoking rates by 7%, particularly among 13-14 year-olds (12%) and teen girls (8%).
- Youth who consider their parents' opinions to be very important are 18% less likely to smoke than teens who do not value their parents' opinions (22% for females and whites and 29% for 13-14 year olds).

The lead author of this study is Dr. Lisa M. Powell of the University of Illinois at Chicago.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, based in Princeton, N.J., is the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to health and health care. It concentrates its grantmaking in four goal areas: to assure that all Americans have access to quality health care at reasonable cost; to improve the quality of care and support for people with chronic health conditions; to promote healthy communities and lifestyles; and to reduce the personal, social and economic harm caused by substance abuse - tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs. More information on the Foundation can be found at www.rwjf.org.

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