

World No-Tobacco Day: 31 May 1992

TO HELP protect the health of the world's population from the tobacco epidemic, the WHO Tobacco or Health programme [1] plays a leading role in promoting the concept of tobacco-free societies and lifestyles as a positive social norm. The aim of the programme is to attain an immediate decrease in, and ultimate prevention of, tobacco-related diseases, which are currently killing 3 000 000 each year. To attain this goal WHO has been mandated to employ various media to develop informed public opinion on health matters. This information is crucial if governments, the population at large and relevant target groups—such as the health and teaching professions, community leaders and decision-makers—are to be convinced of the extent and gravity of the tobacco problem and the feasibility of control measures.

As a tool for public information and education, WHO has been requested to coordinate the worldwide celebration of the World No-Tobacco days held on 31 May each year. Originally, this day was set aside to appeal to all those who smoke or chew tobacco to stop for at least 24 h, as a first step towards ceasing their harmful and wasteful behaviour. Currently, World No-Tobacco days are also seen as opportunities for WHO to call for action in the tobacco or health area and to initiate research on specific themes and subsequently disseminate information.

This year, World No-Tobacco Day is dedicated to workers and has the theme: tobacco-free workplaces, safer and healthier. The workplace is one of the places where people spend most of their lives, so the least they can expect is to be able to breathe clean healthy air at work, unpolluted by tobacco smoke.

The combined effect of smoking and occupational hazards has shown that there are significant differences between the morbidity of smokers and non-smokers in many occupations, and that the interaction of the two types of hazard can, in certain

circumstances, increase the risk of many diseases, particularly the chronic obstructive lung diseases, lung cancer and cardiovascular diseases, as well as specific disabilities. Tobacco smoking is not only dangerous to smokers but also to non-smokers and acute effects and increased risks are caused by exposure to environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) (passive smoking) [2, 3]. For these reasons, over the past few years the trend towards tobacco-free workplaces has accelerated and legislation, regulations and efforts to liberate workplaces from tobacco smoking have been devised, but more needs to be done.

To support the celebration of the Day, the WHO is publishing an advisory kit and a press kit containing information on tobacco-free workplaces, the health effects of occupational hazards and smoking, the economic burden it entails, the laws and regulations necessary to promote a tobacco-free workplace and the means of creating a tobacco-free workplace. This information is distributed worldwide and is available from the Tobacco or Health programme at WHO in Geneva. The Director-General of WHO is calling on all those concerned by these issues to work together in their preparations to ensure that World No-Tobacco Day, 31 May 1992, is a global endeavour.

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Epigenetic Effects on Radiosensitivity: the Extracellular Matrix and Growth Factors

THE ACCOMPANYING paper by Fuks *et al.* [1] is a provocative and intriguing report which builds upon previous work from his laboratory which demonstrated that basic fibroblast growth factor (bFGF) induced potentially lethal damage repair in bovine aortic endothelial cells (BAEC) [2]. In this article the authors

report that when radiation survival of BAECs is assayed in dishes precoated with autologous natural basement membrane-like extracellular matrix, a survival advantage is observed when compared with cells plated on plastic or cells treated with biologically unrelated (mouse) HR9-bFGF/ECM. The authors point out that although the media of either tissue culture was not supplemented with bFGF, these culture systems are still exposed to stimulation by bFGF produced following irradiation.

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