

# NEWS AND COMMENT

## NEW JOURNAL FOCUSES ON TOBACCO AND HEALTH

A new international journal, *Tobacco Control*, is being produced quarterly by the BMJ Publishing Group of London. The journal is edited by Ronald M. Davis, Chief Medical Officer of the Michigan Department of Community Health. Its deputy editor is Simon Chapman of the Department of Community Medicine, University of Sydney, and Westmead Hospital. The first edition contains a range of articles on tobacco advertising bans, workplace smoking restrictions, litigation and tobacco and disease.

Dr Davis wrote in his first editorial: "Despite its slow growth, the field of tobacco and health has a lot going for it. There is no shortage of horrifying statistics to justify working in this area. For those who seek challenges, we are fighting a deadly, addictive behaviour supported by a wealthy and powerful industry. The people who work in this area are extremely committed to, and passionate about, their work. Our problems include lack of resources and an inadequate co-ordination of activities. Our goals are often disparate and our efforts are fragmented — and fragmentation seems to be increasing . . . *Tobacco Control* will not be able to ameliorate the problem of scarce resources. However, my hope is that it will help foster communication, co-operation and cohesion among the many organisations and individuals working in this field. I also hope the journal can enhance the esteem of the movement, to help it attract a more abundant supply of educators, advocates and researchers."

## READERS ASKED FOR STATISTICS SUBJECT SUGGESTIONS

The Queensland office of the Australian Bureau of Statistics wants people interested in statistics on acute hospitals, psychiatric hospitals and day hospital facilities to help it decide which tables should be produced each year. Data are being collected from private and public hospitals to provide comprehensive 1991-92 statistical information on hospitals in Australia. Suggestions should be telephoned to Keith Carter or Brian Holliday at the ABS on (008) 806 415.

## NEW GP SENTINEL SURVEILLANCE NETWORK

The Northern Sydney Area Health Service Public Health Unit has set up a sentinel surveillance network with 30 general practitioners in the Area. The network, launched in June, adds to other sentinel networks in the Central Sydney and Western Sydney Area Health Services. The networks use common definitions of conditions and similar computer software where possible.

Northern Sydney's sentinel GPs will monitor acute asthma, chicken pox, hepatitis B, immunisation and

the new *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib) immunisation. They can also comment on interesting or unusual conditions they encounter. Data are sent to the PHU and entered on the computer database. The GPs receive any analysis of the data, and the result is that both the PHU and the GPs are able to:

- collect morbidity data or conditions not normally monitored, such as acute asthma and chicken pox;
- detect rapidly a change in the rate of non-notifiable disease such as influenza; and
- measure the impact of the introduction of a new vaccine.

*Donald Holt, Director, Northern Sydney Area Public Health Unit.*

## HEALTH PROMOTION UNIT MOVES TO PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION

On July 1, 1992 the Central Office Health Promotion Unit (HPU) became part of the Public Health Division under the direction of the Chief Health Officer. The move was aimed to strengthen the Department's efforts to improve health outcomes in NSW.

Deputy Chief Health Officer Gavin Frost said the Unit has mounted well regarded campaigns, including Me No Fry and Fruit'n Veg, under the leadership of Michael Ward. However much more can be done to improve synergy of public health efforts focusing on the major health problems in NSW. The move is an important step in this direction, he said.

## PUBLIC HEALTH NETWORK CONFERENCE

The first annual NSW Public Health Network Conference will be held on November 23 and 24, 1992 at Westmead Hospital. The theme is Public Health In Action. The conference will provide a forum for presentation of the work of members of the Network (the Epidemiology Branch of the NSW Health Department, and Public Health Units). Staff of other public health organisations are encouraged to submit abstracts.

Suitable topics include investigation of clusters of disease (infectious or otherwise), development or evaluation of surveillance systems, evaluation of health services, assessment of environmental health hazards, research on public health problems and implementation or evaluation of a public health program. The deadline for submission of abstracts is September 30.

Send requests for the registration and abstract forms to: PHN Conference Organiser, Epidemiology and Health Services Evaluation Branch, NSW Health Department, Locked Mail Bag 961, North Sydney 2059. Facsimile 391 9232 and telephone 391 9100.