

Innovative new Web site empowers young girls to live smoke-free

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This is a screen shot of a new Web site aimed at preventing smoking in young girls. Credit: No Smoking Room.Org

A new Web site designed to emphasize smoking prevention for young girls has been launched through Children's Hospital at Dartmouth (CHaD) and Dartmouth Medical School (DMS). The safe, online patient education site was created by Dartmouth pediatrician Henry Bernstein to help prevent smoking in young girls 8-11 years old).

Funded by Pfizer Inc. through an unrestricted educational grant, the site—No Smoking Room.Org (www.nosmokingroom.org) is designed to empower young girls to say "no" to smoking and to encourage those who are smoking to quit. Bernstein says the No Smoking Room team is looking for partners to spread the "no smoking" message to as many

young girls and their health influencers, such as parents, as possible.

"Despite a national decline in smoking rates, young girls are exposed to intense social and media pressures to smoke," said Dr. Henry (Hank) Bernstein, D.O., a physician with the Children's Hospital at Dartmouth and a professor of pediatrics at Dartmouth Medical School. "No Smoking Room.Org does not use a bullhorn to share information about the dangers of smoking. Instead, we rely on the savvy internet behavior of youth to easily navigate the various games and activities on the site to learn about living smoke-free. Through this experience, our users learn at a young age about being the 'drivers' of their own health."

The Web site engages 8-11 year old girls through high-quality multimedia features, including "the girlz lounge" where users can send electronic cards, make their own door hangers, write in their own private journal, and build their own "girlz nite-in" room. A television in the "girlz nite-in" room has video advertisements designed by girls, for girls, that convey the consequences of smoking. Facts, quizzes and "ask the expert" questions answered by two Dartmouth pediatricians (Bernstein and Dr. Susanne Tanski, M.D., M.P.H, also a pediatrician and DMS assistant professor of pediatrics) allow girls to test what they know and share that information with friends and family members.

No Smoking Room.Org was designed by Mind Your Mind, a Canadian-based private social service non-profit organization, in collaboration with Girls, Inc., with sites in Bowling Green, Kentucky and Bloomington, Indiana, and other community groups. The site also involved the Girl's Advisory Group, comprised of 10 girls who helped shape the girl-centered vision for the site.

Source: Dartmouth Medical School

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