

Smokers would rather give up for their pooch's health rather than their own

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Smokers are more likely to quit smoking for the sake of their pets' health than they are for their own, suggests research published ahead of print in *Tobacco Control*.

The published evidence shows that second hand tobacco smoke can be as dangerous for pets as it is for the non-smoking partners of smokers. Exposure to it has been associated with lymph gland, nasal, and lung cancers; allergies; eye and skin diseases; as well as respiratory problems in cats and dogs.

But few smokers realise what impact their habit is having on the health of their pets, say the US researchers.

They set up an online survey for pet owners resident in south eastern Michigan, quizzing them about their and their partners' smoking behaviours, and what they knew about the effects of second hand smoke on their pets.

In all, almost 3300 people responded, one in five of whom were smokers and more than one in four of whom (27%) lived with at least one smoker. The average number of cigarettes smoked was 13.5 a day, with around half of those smoked in the home.

Nearly one in three of the smokers (28.4%) said that knowing that smoking was bad for their pets' health would spur them to give it up. And almost one in 10 (8.7%) said this would prompt them to ask their

partners to quit, while around one in seven (14%) said they would tell their partner to smoke outdoors.

These figures were even higher among non-smokers, more than 16% of whom said they would ask their partner to quit, while around one in four (24%) said they would tell their partner to smoke outdoors.

Around four out of 10 smokers and one in four non-smokers living with smokers said they would be interested in receiving information on the effects of smoking and how to give up.

Public health campaigns targeting smokers would do well to focus on the detrimental impact of second hand tobacco smoke on pets, say the authors. US pet owners are clearly a very devoted bunch, they say, which such campaigns could tap into.

Almost two thirds of US households have a pet, and their combined spending power on pet supplies and over the counter medicines was estimated to be in the region of more than US\$ 10 billion last year. And a survey carried out by the American Animal Hospital Association in 2008 showed that more than half of the respondents said that if they were stranded on a desert island, they would prefer the company of their pet to that of another person.

Source: British Medical Journal

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