

Oncologists play key role in fight against smoking

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Oncologists should consider it their professional duty to set a healthy example by not smoking and by advocating against tobacco use locally and internationally, two Emory faculty members argue in an article scheduled for publication in the September issue of *The Oncologist*.

Authors Rebecca Pentz, PhD, professor of [hematology](#) and [medical oncology](#) in research ethics at the Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University and Carla Berg, PhD, assistant professor of behavioral sciences and health education at the Rollins School of Public Health, note that tobacco related deaths kill more people around the world than AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria combined. While some countries have made significant strides in steering people away from tobacco use in recent decades, progress has been uneven.

Despite overwhelming evidence for the harmful health effects of [smoking](#) tobacco, a large percentage of physicians in many countries smoke. For example, some surveys indicate that more than 40 percent of male Chinese physicians are smokers.

Pentz and Berg urge their colleagues to take measures such as:

- Advocating for insurance coverage for treatments aimed at helping people quit smoking, such as counseling and medication
- Supporting legislation promoting smoke-free environments.

They also call for the United States and other nations to ratify the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. The FCTC outlines a program of regulating tobacco use including: increasing tobacco taxation, banning tobacco advertising, prohibiting smoking in public places and requiring warnings on tobacco packaging. It was adopted by the United Nations in 2003 and the Bush administration signed the treaty; however, it has not been sent to the U.S. Senate for ratification.

Pentz and Berg conclude: "Oncologists may have considered activism against [tobacco use](#) to be laudable but optional, to be accomplished by the Good Samaritans among them. We argue that quitting or abstaining from smoking, advocating for smoke-free environments in one's own community, and actively supporting one's international colleagues to do the same are duties, grounded in both common sense and in the ethics of professionalism."

Provided by Emory University

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