

Smoking cessation trial prompts call for subsidies on wider range of quit therapies

May 29 2014, by Dr Brent Caldwell



Dr Brent Caldwell

Community smoking-cessation workers are calling for the government to subsidise a wider range of nicotine replacement therapies so that smokers can afford to use products that are proving to be more popular and effective for those trying to quit.

A University of Otago Wellington trial has been offering smokers the chance to try therapies through kiosks in community locations throughout the lower North Island, such as malls, since January. Smokers can take a free sample of a week's supply of as many [products](#) as they like, and are supported by expert cessation workers through regular follow-up at the community location or over the phone. Lead researcher Dr Brent Caldwell says several hundred smokers have taken up the spur-of-the-moment chance to try [nicotine replacement therapy](#) at the stalls, with the vast majority choosing the nicotine inhalator and nicotine

mouthspray.

However cost remains a huge barrier once people have used up their free supply of these popular products, he says.

Many people are willing to pay the ongoing cost of the products, but many more are choosing not to buy further products after they get their free one, he says.

Dr Caldwell has surveyed 61 cessation workers from throughout the lower North Island, who say the QuickMist mouthspray and inhalator should be subsidised just like standard nicotine replacement therapies, so that all Kiwi smokers can have ready access to them.

The survey found that at least half of the smokers treated by cessation workers had told them they wished they could use something other than the standard therapies of the patch, gum, and lozenge.

The cessation workers reported that more than three quarters of their patients would benefit from access to the inhalator and mouthspray. Nearly all workers (98%) thought that these products should be subsidised as part of the Quit Card program, which gives smokers access to nicotine replacement therapy at the subsidised price of \$5.

Their call comes ahead of World Smokefree Day this Saturday 31 May.

A petition at the kiosk locations is being planned to ask the Ministry of Health to subsidise the mouthspray and inhalator.

"It's really hard for smokers to spend money on nicotine replacement therapy, because most [smokers](#) cannot immediately switch from buying cigarettes to buying the therapies, and for a period of time they need to buy both the cigarettes and therapies," Dr Caldwell says.

"Once they quit smoking and only need to buy the therapies, they will save a lot of money, but at least initially when they are smoking and using [nicotine replacement](#) therapy at the same time it can be more expensive which might be a barrier for some people."

Provided by University of Otago

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