

## Senior Lifestyles

# U of R study attempts to help seniors 'kick the habit'

ROCHESTER — Several studies indicate that quitting smoking lowers the risk of health problems or early death no matter how old the smoker.

Yet relatively little is known about what strategies may be especially helpful for seniors who wish to quit.

To find out, a new study at the University of Rochester will follow smokers age 60 and over who want to stop smoking on their own. Deborah Ossip-Klein, associate professor of psychology and director of the U of R's Smoking Research Program, is principal investigator.

Conducted in cooperation with the American Lung Association of the Finger Lakes Region, the study is supported with funds from the National Institute on Aging and the Rochester Area Claude Pepper Center.

Open to the first 200 participants who qualify, the study began enrolling subjects Oct. 1. To qualify for Smokers' Self-Help Project60, participants must:

- be at least 60 years old, by Oct. 1, 1992;
- currently smoke at least 10 cigarettes a day, and have smoked that

much for at least 10 years;

- be interested in quitting smoking over the next three months;
- live within the calling area of Monroe County and plan to remain there for the next six months;
- live in a home or apartment with access to a private telephone.

People who want to enroll may call the "Freedom Line" at 716/442-3219, Monday through Friday, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and leave their name and number with the operator.

Participants will receive a Clear Horizons self-help manual developed specifically to address concerns of smokers aged 60 or more, an invitation to the Freedom Line smokers' hotline, and a series of follow-up contacts by mail or phone over a six-month period.

Ossip-Klein, who has studied self-quitting populations extensively, believes that the self-help approach may be an effective means of reaching seniors.

"Though clinics can be a very good way to quit smoking, only five to 10 percent of the general smoking popu-

lation use clinics," said Ossip-Klein. "The majority of smokers who quit do so on their own. Given that some seniors may have physical limitations which can further discourage attendance at a smoking clinic, self-help approaches may be the best way to reach this important group."

Studies clearly show that older smokers have more illness and die earlier than people the same age who don't smoke, she said. "Smoking is re-

lated to seven of the 14 top causes of death for people age 65 and older. It's a major risk factor in heart disease, cancer, strokes, chronic lung disease, diabetes, atherosclerosis, and ulcers."

The good news, according to Ossip-Klein, is that even after a lifetime of smoking, people who stop lower their risk of suffering these and other diseases, and improve their prospects for longevity.

## Stroke victims receiving tasty medicine at St. Ann's Home

ROCHESTER — Can cotton candy be just what the doctor ordered for people who have trouble tasting, chewing and swallowing food?

The medical department at St. Ann's Home, 1500 Portland Ave., thinks so.

Last month doctors began distributing small portions of cotton candy to residents, not only to satisfy a sweet tooth, but also to try stimulating the oral and motor movements of the mouth and throat — perhaps even to help people with a speech impairment.

"It's a quality-of-life issue," said Dr. James Wood, St. Ann's vice president and medical director. "Many elderly

people, including most stroke victims, cannot taste, chew or swallow whole foods. They've lost the ability to enjoy that aspect of life that most of us take for granted.

Wood said the concept of using cotton candy is the brainchild of St. Ann's quality-of-life committee of nurses, therapists, volunteers and staff.

Residents of St. Ann's Home, The Heritage and Home Connection will receive at least one serving a week or more if they are being treated for a medical or therapeutic condition. No one will be excluded unless there are specific medical reasons.

Doctors will study other applications if the pilot-program works. One method may be to mix and dispense cotton candy with patient medications.

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