



Press Release
8 November 2007

SMOKERS URGED TO QUIT DURING MOUTH CANCER AWARENESS WEEK

The number of people in Northern Ireland dying as a result of Mouth Cancer, which affects the lips, tongue, cheeks and throat, is on the increase. In 2005, more than fifty people died from the disease in Northern Ireland. Mouth Cancer also tends to be more prevalent in men than in women and, generally, men are twice as likely as women to die from the disease.

The Western Health and Social Care Trust in partnership with the Western Health and Social Services Board are encouraging people to be aware of the causes and symptoms of mouth cancer during Mouth Cancer Awareness Week 11 - 17 November.

Mouth cancer is a malignant growth, which can occur in or on any part of the mouth, tongue or lips. It can often present itself as a painless ulcer that does not heal or less often, a red or white patch in the mouth.

Sonia Montgomery of the WHSCT's Health Promotion Department said, "Mouth cancer, like many other cancers, can be treated more effectively if it is detected at an early stage. A person's survival chances can increase by 40% if the lesion is treated early".

As early diagnosis is difficult for mouth cancer, we need to make people aware that it can be prevented through lifestyle choices. These include giving up smoking, reducing alcohol consumption and ensuring a healthy balanced diet.

Mark McBride, Tobacco Control Coordinator, WHSSB said, "Giving up smoking is the first and most important step to reducing the risk of developing

mouth cancer and help with quitting is widely available from GP practices, pharmacies, hospitals and community groups across the Western Health and Social Services Board area. These smoking cessation services are free and confidential and offer individual and group support in an informal setting. Advice is available regarding coping with cravings and tips for giving up successfully”.

The WHSCT’s Health Promotion Department in partnership with the Ulster Cancer Foundation and the Western Tobacco Control Group also deliver training for dentists in smoking cessation techniques.

Sonia continued, “Dentists are ideally placed to advise people how to prevent mouth cancer by stopping smoking. They are also able to detect early warning signs of mouth cancer during a routine check-up therefore it is vital that people regularly visit their dentist at least once a year”.

Anyone who is concerned about mouth cancer should speak to their dentist, GP, local pharmacist or contact the Ulster Cancer Foundation’s freephone helpline which is a confidential service, staffed by a team of specialist cancer nurses on 0800 783 3339, available 9am – 5pm, Monday – Friday. Further information on smoking cessation services can be obtained from Mark McBride, Tobacco Control Coordinator, WHSSB.

Ends....

**For further information contact:
Western Health and Social Care Trust Communications Office:
(028) 7161 1188 / 7161 1429**

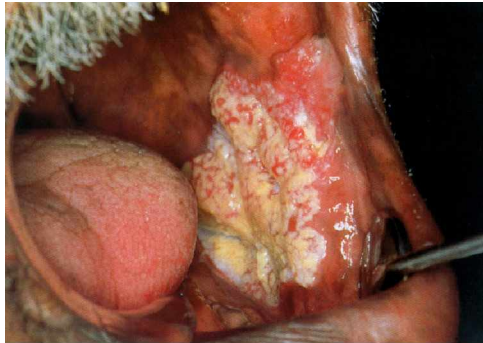
**Health Promotion Department
Western Health and Social Care Trust
(028) 7186 5127**

Notes to the Editor

Mark McBride is the Tobacco Control Coordinator for the Western Health and Social Services Board. He can be contacted at 028 8225 3952 for information on issues and activities related to smoking cessation in the Western Board

area. Information regarding the Western Tobacco Control group can be found at www.whssb.n-i.nhs.uk

Brief Intervention Smoking Cessation Training is delivered on a regular basis to local dental professionals and is run in partnership with the Ulster Cancer Foundation and the Western Tobacco Control Group. Similar training is also available for individuals working in community settings throughout the Western Trust area. Further information regarding this training is available by contacting Ms. Sonia Montgomery, Health Promotion Officer for Oral Health, WHSCT, Health Promotion Department.



Advanced neoplastic lesion which, with regular screening could have been detected and treated much earlier.