



For Immediate Release — Monday, January 19, 2015

Nursing instructor redesigning resource kits to help teachers deliver tobacco prevention education to kids

Health Canada National Non-Smoking Week begins today

Keeping our children free of the harms associated with tobacco use is an ongoing battle that the University of Lethbridge's Kathy Haight is keen on waging – and she's got an army of nursing students to support the fight.

Haight, armed with a \$60,000 grant from the Alberta Tobacco Reduction Strategy, is in the process of redeveloping the current teacher resource kits intended to support Alberta's Grades 4, 5 and 6 teachers as they deliver tobacco prevention strategies in the classroom. Haight is a registered nurse who teaches in the Faculty of Health Sciences.

"Tobacco companies are coming up with something new every day that targets children. This kit provides a way to keep teachers up-to-date and informed of changes and best practices in school-based tobacco prevention," says Haight, whose strategy includes putting all new resources online so that they can be regularly updated to keep in step with tobacco company initiatives.

"The most recent change that I've seen is the popularity of cigarillos," says Haight. "They're individually packaged, so they don't fall within all the laws and regulations, and they're conveniently packaged in bright colors to look like lip glosses and such." The current kits available to teachers are 11 years old and woefully out-of-date, available only in paper and pdf form. Her work includes not only adding updated information and lesson plans, but doing so in a format that takes advantage of today's classroom technology, such as smart boards. A second phase of the update will be to evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

Haight coordinates opportunities to send her third- and fourth-year nursing students into classrooms as part of their community-health practice courses. And while teaching tobacco prevention is part of the Alberta curriculum, it's up to individual teachers to determine the number of lessons and the depth and breadth of discussion on the topic. The arrangement is mutually beneficial because it tends to increase the amount of time teachers dedicate to tobacco prevention, all the while providing nursing students with

practical opportunities to deliver school-based prevention programs in the community.

“My nursing students go into the classroom every week for five consecutive weeks,” says Haight, who now delivers the program to more than 30 classrooms annually. She says demand for the program has increased over the four years she’s been involved.

With early education, Haight says that children are better equipped to make informed decisions about tobacco use (the lesson plans purposely move beyond facts and figures to address strategies such as building resiliency skills and recognizing negative peer pressure).

“The intent is to provide children with information prior to them experiencing the peer pressure, to help them pre-contemplate decisions,” explains Haight. “We intentionally target kids in Grades 4 and 5 in Lethbridge because they are transitioning into middle school for Grade 6. The literature is strong to suggest that you want to provide kids with this tobacco prevention intervention before they hit that transition year, because they're at greatest risk when they're in a transition.”

-- 30 --

Contact: Trevor Kenney, News & Information Manager

403-329-2710

403-360-7639 (cell)

trevor.kenney@uleth.ca

Kathy Haight, Nursing Instructor

403-394-3947

katherine.haight@uleth.ca