



May 2000

Message from the Medical Officer of Health

This report informs the residents of Bruce and Grey about local health issues and concerns.

SHORTENED LIVES IN BRUCE-GREY

Our community is currently faced with many important health issues, but I am particularly concerned about the high rates of premature death from heart disease and lung cancer. Many deaths in our area are linked to smoking and second-hand smoke. These deaths can be prevented.

In Bruce-Grey, *heart disease* and *cancer* were the leading causes of death in 1996, accounting for 66% of all deaths. *Heart disease* was also the leading cause of hospitalization. Of all cancer deaths, *lung cancer* is responsible for more deaths than any other kind of cancer for both men and women in this region. Over the years, there has been a dramatic increase in *lung cancer* deaths in women. In fact, since 1994 in Bruce-Grey, more women died from *lung cancer* than from *breast cancer*.

Smoking is Ontario's most important public health hazard because of the huge amount of death and disease it causes. Cigarette smoking was responsible for 26% of all deaths in men and 16% of all deaths in women in Canada in 1996. Locally, the number of daily smokers remains high (22%). We know that nearly all adult smokers become addicted as teens. Unfortunately, this trend continues as smoking rates increase among teens. Even more distressing is that more teens smoke in our region than in Ontario.

The Public Health Unit is committed to providing leadership in health protection and promotion, disease prevention, and community health care. To this end, there are currently many exciting initiatives underway including the development of a common bylaw on smoking, youth smoking prevention activities and community-based smoking education programs. Together we can prevent many needless deaths and illnesses caused by smoking and work toward a healthier community.

Dr. Murray McQuigge
Medical Officer of Health
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound Health Unit

Smoking and Heart Disease.

- *Heart disease* is the leading cause of death in Bruce-Grey.
- A smoker has a 30 to 45% greater chance of developing a heart disorder than a non-smoker.
- In Bruce-Grey, more people die at younger ages from *heart disease* compared to Ontario as a whole.
- More people in Bruce-Grey are admitted to hospital for *heart disease* than any other cause.

Smoking and Lung Cancer.

- *Lung cancer* is responsible for more total deaths than any other type of cancer in Bruce-Grey.
- Second-hand smoke is related to 25% of lung cancer deaths. (Hackshaw, AK, Law, MR, & Wald, NJ. (1997). The accumulated evidence on lung cancer and environmental tobacco smoke. *British Medical Journal*.)
- Nine out of ten people with lung cancer usually die within 2 years of diagnosis.
- Smoking rates have increased in females and, as a result, female *lung cancer* deaths have surpassed the deaths from breast cancer in this area.

Smoking and Teens.

- Nine in 10 adult smokers became addicted as teens. Daily smokers in this region started smoking at younger ages compared to Ontario.
- Teen smoking is on the rise. In Canada, teen smoking rates have increased over 35% between 1990 and 1996. In this region, 22% of teens smoke daily or occasionally which is higher than Ontario.
- Females 12 to 17 years old are more likely than their male counterparts to smoke.

The Good News.

Health Problems caused by smoking can be beaten.

- Deaths caused from smoking CAN be prevented.
- The health benefits of quitting smoking are substantial and quick. These include reduced risk of dying from a heart attack (cut in half within first year) and the risk of dying from lung cancer (cut in half within 10 years).
- Smokers can quit but it takes time and practice. It usually takes a smoker five attempts before they succeed in quitting. Help is available from your local public health unit, pharmacist, and doctor.

A Common Bylaw on Smoking is Coming.

- The Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound Health Unit has initiated the process to develop a common bylaw on smoking for Bruce County by May 31, 2001. A similar process will follow in Grey County in the near future.
- There are many benefits of a common bylaw on smoking. These include reduced exposure to second-hand smoke, reduced health risks, consistent regulations on smoking in public places, and reduced tobacco use.
- The public is ready. A local survey showed that 79% support bylaws banning smoking in public places and 94% support restricting smoking in arenas and recreation centres.
- Employees are concerned about the effects of second-hand smoke on their health. A local survey showed that 91% of respondents supported restricting smoking in workplaces. Currently, only 28% of workers in this area are employed in places where smoking is restricted completely.

What You Can Do

If you are a smoker, try to quit. If you tried before and failed, try again.

- Self-Help resources are available from the Public Health Unit.
Just phone (519)376-9420 or 1-800-263-3456.

Declare your home smoke-free.

- About two-thirds of people from this area reported they lived in smoke-free homes.

Protect children from the effects of second-hand smoke.

- Children exposed to smoke have higher rates of lung and ear infections, asthma and lower lung functioning.

Local businesses are going smoke-free.

- More local businesses are going smoke-free. Give them your support.
- Contact your mayor/reeve or town/county councillors and tell them you want to see a common bylaw on smoking in your area.

**Highlights from the Public Health Unit's Health Status Report,
1999.**

Based on the most recent data available. This report provides a snapshot of health in our community.

- Bruce-Grey has more people aged 45 and over compared to Ontario.
- The hospital admission rates in this area for nearly all causes were higher than Ontario.
- In Bruce-Grey, birth rates have fallen by 25% between 1986 to 1996 and were much lower than the province.
- There were fewer low birth weight babies (less than 2500 grams) born in Bruce-Grey compared to the Ontario rate.
- In Bruce-Grey between 1992 and 1995, abortion rates were often over 50% lower than Ontario.
- Teen pregnancy rates (# of pregnancies for every 1,000 women aged 15 to 19) were consistently lower for Bruce-Grey than Ontario.

The full report is available upon request.

For more information:

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