The Second European Symposium on
Smoking in pregnancy and passive smoking in
children
A European Project 15 March 2001 – 15 September 2002

ACTIVITY REPORT
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Weblink www.cancerfonden.se/smokepreg

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- Project coordinator’s and partners’ own contributions: 59 141,35 Euro
- The European Commission grant: 109 833,92 Euro
- Contributions in kind: 5 241,64 Euro
- Swedish National Institute of Public Health 9158 Euro
- Swedish Heart-Lung Foundation 5 495 Euro

Objectives of project
- To stimulate and to promote the international exchange of experiences on achieving effective intervention strategies in order to reduce smoking in pregnancy and among parents of small children.
- This objective was to be achieved through the organisation of a European symposium on smoking in pregnancy and passive smoking and children.

Executive Summary
Project funding was granted by the European Commission to organise a European symposium during three days in Stockholm in May 2002. The key-note presentations of the symposium will be published in proceedings and distributed in January 2003 to all participants and others interested.
The symposium explored three key-note themes
- Status of the problem
- Intervention strategies
- Regional and national intervention
- Future perspectives

and the workshops eight themes
- Epidemiology
- Social inequalities
- Research needs
- Regional and national intervention strategies
- Health behaviour change among pregnant women and parents of young children
- Motivational interviewing
- Training in intervention strategies
- Determinants of quitting and relaps prevention

The project drew together 12 partner organisations (cancer societies, non-governmental and governmental organisations) which ensured wide knowledge on tobacco prevention issues as well as possible people to be contacted as key-note speakers, workshop leaders, moderators, etc.

The symposium took place 27-29 May at Djurönäset, beautifully located in the archipelago south of Stockholm. 150 delegates representing research institutions and health professionals such as midwives, nurses, and physicians from 16 countries attended the conference. Intervention materials and research findings were presented in a poster exhibition area.

The conference ended with a summary and perspective presentation which reflected the key-note presentations and workshop conclusions.

Thanks to generous financial support from the Swedish National Institute of Public Health and the Swedish Heart-Lung Foundation grants were given to six delegates from Bulgaria, Poland and Germany who otherwise would not have been able to participate.
General background/introduction to project

The project was based on the experiences made in the First European Symposium on Smoking in Pregnancy in May 1998, in Bremen, Germany; and the EC project “EUROpean action on Smoking Cessation In Pregnancy (EURO-scip) – A needs assessment” conducted in 1999/2000.

Because of encouraging experiences and results from a longterm national antismoking programme named “Smoke-free Pregnancy” and ”Smoke-free Children”, Sweden was chosen to host the conference. The Swedish Cancer Society was designated as project leader and conference organiser.

Means by which the project was implemented

Lisen Sylwan of the Swedish Cancer Society was the overall coordinator of the symposium in Stockholm and responsible for its organisation. This work was done in partnership with a Stockholm-based conference organiser called Congrex.

An international steering committee was established which represented cancer and tobacco prevention organisations from 11 EU member states, along with Norway. This group met twice in Stockholm on 28 September 2001 and 8 February 2002 prior to the symposium.

Target groups, key speakers and themes for the plenary sessions and workshops were decided upon at this first meeting.

The conference programme was completed in mid-November, and by the end of the month lists of addresses of proposed delegates were obtained from each partner so that the conference announcements/call for abstracts could be issued. Announcements were also issued by other cancer organisations in the EU member states and on the European Network for Smoking Prevention website, as well as by the UICC electronic Globalink network.

At the second meeting, the steering committee agreed on the structure of the conference and reviewed the abstracts. It was decided that all the abstracts, with a few exceptions, should be accepted. A total of 35 abstracts were accepted. Of these, two were selected for presentation at a keynote session.
At the meeting, a decision was made to adopt a generous approach towards the authors of the abstracts. All authors of abstracts were given ten minutes to give a verbal presentation during a workshop. Any who so wished were also given the opportunity to give a poster presentation.

During this meeting, the division of workshop sessions was also decided upon, incorporating eight topics in total: Epidemiology, Social inequalities, Research needs, Regional and national intervention strategies, Health behaviour change among pregnant women and the parents of young children, Motivational interviewing, Training in intervention strategies, and Determinants of quitting and relapse prevention.

Decisions were also made on moderators, and it was decided that the project manager should prepare a press release in English on the aim of the conference, target groups, a description of the programme, etc. A press release of this kind was sent out a week or so after the meeting to all partners to make free use of, translate, add to the websites of the respective organisations and send out to the media. The extent to which the steering committee has been successful in this is unclear.

A local advisory board consisting of four people (apart from the project manager) with a particular interest in and knowledge of the theme of the symposium met three times and provided a lot of assistance with the detailed planning of the programme. These people were Sven Bremberg and Margaretha Haglund of the National Institute of Public Health, midwife Ulla Lennartsson, Stockholm City Council, and Birgitta Johansson of the Swedish Cancer Society.

**Media**

Contact with Swedish TV resulted in a news report on the conference and success with the Swedish Smoke-free Children initiative a couple of days before the conference began. The news item in which the project manager and a midwife were interviewed was transmitted on a number of occasions throughout the day.

A number of Swedish magazines have reported on the conference afterwards.
The Symposium – Djurönäset, Stockholm, 27-29 May 2002

The symposium began with a beautiful, atmospheric slide show on how life begins which emphasised our vision for the conference – a smoke-free childhood for all children.

“Why do things have to get worse before they get better?” asked Margaretha Haglund of the National Institute of Public Health, who was one of the first speakers at the conference. She showed future forecasts which indicate that the number of women in the world who smoke will increase drastically until 2025. She encouraged action instead of passively accepting the rise in the development curves.

During pregnancy is a good time to reach out to women who smoke and try to persuade them to give up, she stated. “But we should not just talk about giving up smoking as something they should do for the sake of their children. First and foremost, women must give up smoking because it is good for them and their futures to do so.”

Issues relating to counselling methods attracted a lot of interest at the symposium. Jennifer Percival, project manager for tobacco training at the Royal College of Nursing, talked about the five As, i.e. the WHO guidelines on how nursing staff should discuss smoking with their patients. These As stand for Ask, Advise, Assess, Assist and Arrange. One good way of translating the WHO guidelines into practical work with pregnant women and the parents of young children is to use motivational interviewing, she said, referring to the material produced in Sweden for midwives – a guide and a video – which had been translated into English on account of the symposium. This, which as Jennifer Percival pointed out is the only material of its kind, was ordered by a hundred or so symposium delegates.

Peter Lang of the Federal Centre for Health Education in Germany, summed up the conference with the following appeals: never give up helping women to lead a smoke-free life. Do not forget that pregnant women are expecting their midwives to ask about smoking. Help change the social environment so that being a non-smoker is the norm. Focus on the value of women giving up smoking for their own sakes. Put forward the smoke-free message far in advance of pregnancy, and afterwards as well. And finally, remember that this work is never finished.
Attendance
150 people from 16 countries attended the conference. The United Kingdom and Denmark were particularly well represented, with 41 and 23 delegates respectively.

Two delegates, Kathy Everett and Zaino Petersen, came all the way from South Africa. In spite of major addiction problems among the poor population, they were both hopeful: "the symposium has demonstrated that it is possible to hold conversations on smoking with pregnant women without them getting angry. Because so many pregnant women in South Africa smoke, we will have done a very good job if we can help just a few per cent of them to give up."

Thanks to a generous contribution from the Swedish Heart-Lung Foundation and the National Institute of Public Health, delegates from Bulgaria and Poland were also able to take part.

Very disappointingly, densely populated countries such as France and Italy sent only 3 delegates and 1 delegate respectively, and no-one attended from Switzerland or Austria.

Results
The proceedings from the symposium are being produced and will be distributed to all delegates in January 2003. These proceedings will be available in PDF format on the websites of both the Swedish Cancer Society and Euro-scip. For anyone else who may be interested in viewing the proceedings, information on where and how to order the publication will be passed on via the newsletters, among other things, produced within the scope of the EU’s Euro-scip support project and aimed at maternity and child health care staff.

The Swedish Cancer Society, the Swedish Heart-Lung Foundation and the National Institute of Public Health have worked together to publish a report on their work, which has now been in progress for ten years, with a view to sharing the positive experiences of Smoke-free Children. This report has been translated into English and will also be distributed to symposium delegates in January 2003.

Since the symposium, project manager Lisen Sylwan has received much acclaim for the arrangements of the conference, which people considered to be very well
planned. All the delegates stayed at the actual conference centre – situated in a remote and beautiful part of the countryside – which encouraged people to communicate and make new contacts. New projects have come into being as a result of the conference: among other things, Sweden has entered into cooperation with South Africa. Lots of orders received for the material for midwives on motivational interviewing demonstrate that people’s interest has been aroused in teaching the interviewing method to maternity health care staff.

Strengths and weaknesses of the project

- **Strengths**
  Work on tobacco prevention includes many widely differing aspects: political, economic, behavioural, medical, etc. This is why it is of great value that a profession with strong collective interests – in this instance people who work with maternity and child health care and tobacco prevention – are given the opportunity to meet up separately.

  Even though we would have liked to see more people taking part in the conference, the fact that it was relatively small was an advantage. This helped create a tolerant and friendly atmosphere which provided scope for lots of creative ideas and networking.

  Tobacco prevention work in the field of maternity and child health care has to be regarded as long-term. Therefore, it has been extremely valuable to follow up the first conference of this kind, which took place in Bremen in 1998.

- **Weaknesses**
  Some countries have no structures in place to support anti-smoking programmes. Differences in the setup of the maternity and child health care systems sometimes make it very difficult to implement general guidelines.

  As mentioned above, it is regrettable that major countries such as France and Italy were poorly represented at the conference.

  It has not been possible to publish the proceedings within the project period due to a lack of time, which is a disadvantage for conference delegates. It also means that the costs of the Swedish Cancer Society will not be covered.
One lesson to be learned for any future conferences is that work on preparations and follow-ups must be allocated to at least one more person.

Conclusion

- If children are allowed to grow up smoke-free, it is more likely that they will continue to live their lives without smoking. People are most prepared to change their lifestyles during pregnancy and when they have small children. Therefore, it should go without saying for health care staff that they should raise parents’ awareness of their smoking habits during this time.

- A majority of pregnant women and parents of young children regularly visit maternity and child health care clinics. For this reason, this is also a golden opportunity to discuss smoking with parents.

- Over the last few years, people have gained a greater knowledge and awareness of how to influence changes in lifestyle. Nowadays, good material is also available which means that countries with no previous experience in this field can learn from others.

- A lot of action is required in order to succeed in reducing smoking among pregnant women and the parents of young children, and this work has to take the long-term view.

Ways forward

- For some countries, this conference has been the first step towards tobacco prevention work in the field of maternity and paediatric health care. For others, it has brought new knowledge and new opportunities for networking. The ongoing Euro-scip project has already benefited from contacts and experiences from the conference.

- Portugal has shown a great interest in hosting a third international conference on smoking during pregnancy and passive smoking and children by 2006 at the latest. As smoking is on the increase among women in southern Europe, Portugal will, for this reason, too, be an appropriate host country.
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