

Anti-Smoking Pill Can Help Some Hard-Core Smokers Quit, UCLA Study Says

By **EMMA ROSS**
Sentinel Wire Services

FLORENCE, Italy (AP)—The anti-smoking pill Zyban could help even some of the most hardcore smokers—those who can't stop, despite being sick with a debilitating lung disease, according to a study by University of California, Los Angeles researchers.

Studies have shown the drug can help up to 30 percent of average smokers stay off cigarettes for at least a year. But the medication has never been tested in people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, a smoking-induced lung illness that the World Health Organization estimates affects 600 million people worldwide and kills about 3 million every year.

Experts say about 60 percent of those with the condition, known as "smoker's lung," continue to smoke and that quitting tobacco is the only thing that has been shown to halt or slow its progression.

The findings, presented Friday at the World Congress on Lung Health, showed that taking the drug almost doubled the chances of quitting, from 9 percent to 16 percent.

"They almost doubled their chances of giving up. That's about the same chance as smokers in general," said Dr. Donald P. Tashkin, a professor of pulmonology at UCLA and leader of the study.

The study was funded by Glaxo Wellcome, the drug's maker.

Dr. Pierre Bartsch, professor of lung medicine at the University of Liege in Belgium, said the findings are important because people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease have the most diffi-

culty giving up smoking, which is their only chance of retarding their disease.

"Of course the results show a much lower success rate than in the general population, but these are people who were smoking almost two packs a day for 25 years," Bartsch said. "It's important to show that something can help these patients give up."

It probably wouldn't be a good treatment for those with the advanced stage of the disease—about 40 percent of all those with the illness—because it may not be a good idea to mix the drug with the other drugs those patients use, Bartsch said.

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease causes gradual, irreversible damage to the lungs, and encompasses such diseases as emphysema and chronic bronchitis.

It afflicts about 15 million Americans and kills about 100,000 of them a year, according to the American Lung Association. It is the fourth leading cause of death in the United States behind heart disease, cancer and stroke.

The study, conducted by scientists at the University of California, Los Angeles, involved 411 people about 54 years old from across the United States who had the lung illness and smoked almost two packs of cigarettes a day.

All had mild or moderate stages of the disease, where patients cough, wheeze and feel breathless but don't yet need inhalers to help them breathe. Most had tried various methods to stop smoking in the past.

For 12 weeks, half were given

SEE SMOKING PILL/A-7

Smoking Pill May Help Hard-Core Smokers

CONTINUED FROM A-12

the drug twice a day, while others were given fake pills. They also got counseling.

When the treatment ended, 18 percent of those on the drug had not inhaled a single puff of tobacco, compared with 10 percent of smokers on the fake pill.

Three months later, 16 percent of those on the drug had stayed off cigarettes, compared with 9 percent of those not getting the medication.

Scientists verified that the smokers had quit by testing their breath for traces of carbon monoxide.

The number of people abandon-

ing the medication early was about the same in both groups—2 percent. Those on the drug reported temporary insomnia at the beginning.

Zyban costs about \$60 per month. It has been available in the United States since 1998 and is currently being launched across Europe.

"It feels so good knowing they have health coverage."

Call Toll-Free
1-888-747-1222

Low-cost and no-cost health coverage for kids

A healthier tomorrow starts today.

HEALTHY FAMILIES MEDICAL FOR CHILDREN

Sponsored by the State of California
www.healthyfamilies.ca.gov

©2000 California Department Of Health Services



Not in my house. Not around my kids.

Secondhand smoke makes over 300,000 children sick each year. You have the power to protect your children from secondhand smoke. Use it to make sure that no one smokes in your home, or anywhere around your children. You have every right and a responsibility to choose what is best for them. If you or someone you know needs help quitting, call 1-800-NO-BUTTS for free information and advice.

Secondhand Smoke Kills. 1-800-NO-BUTTS