



# **ASH**

## **ACTION ON SMOKING AND HEALTH**

2013 H St., N.W. • Washington D.C. 20006 • (202) 659-4310

### **SMOKING LIMITATION IN HOSPITALS AND HEALTH-CARE FACILITIES**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Thousands of American hospital patients suffer severe discomfort and, in many cases, traumatic physical setbacks because tobacco smoking is allowed to run rampant in the hospital setting. Considering that the purpose of a hospital is to heal and that it has been conclusively proven that smoking harms not only the smoker but everyone around him, it is alarming to think that hospitals could allow patients, visitors and even staff members to harm others by their smoking. The purpose of this leaflet is to indicate why smoking should be at least limited in hospitals and health-care facilities.

#### **THE EFFECTS OF SMOKING**

Medical and scientific research has proven that "involuntary" or "passive" smoking is the cause of approximately 50 thousand deaths a year. It has also been determined that there are 30-40 million Americans who have medical conditions which make them susceptible to environmental tobacco smoke. Furthermore, studies show that the majority of healthy nonsmokers suffer from various physical irritations when exposed to tobacco smoke. Obviously, an individual unhealthy enough to be placed in a hospital for any reason should be isolated from anything which might retard the healing process.

There have been reports of patients unable to remain in waiting rooms because of smokers; patients in extreme discomfort as a result of roommates who smoke; and doctors, nurses and other hospital staff members smoking while on duty and in non-smoking designated areas.

In addition to the physical damage caused by both direct and passive smoking, smoking in a hospital conveys the false message that patients may smoke without risk to health. It has also been noted that patients tend to imitate the smoking behavior of hospital staff.

#### **SUGGESTIONS**

The exposure of nonsmoking patients to tobacco smoke contamination, in hospitals and health-care facilities should not be tolerated. If the purpose of a hospital is to restore people to health, how can it hope to do so if it subjects its non-smoking patients to the toxins and poisonous gases which make up ambient tobacco smoke?