sociation with signs and symptoms. *APMIS* 2003;111(5):557-66.

9. Verdon F, Burnand B, Stubi CL, et al. Iron supplementation for unexplained fatigue in non-anaemic women: double blind randomised placebo controlled trial. *BMJ* 2003;326:1124.

DOI:10.1503/cmaj.1060137

Barriers to tobacco cessation

Physicians and other health care providers play an important role in tobacco cessation efforts, providing valuable tools and advice to cigarette smokers.¹ One of the key tools is nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), but some smokers are reluctant to use NRT.²⁻⁴ Finding simple ways to overcome this reluctance is of great importance because NRT promotes the chances of tobacco cessation.

In a recent random-digit dialing telephone survey of adult cigarette smokers in Ontario (conducted in August and September 2005), we found that three-quarters of the 434 respondents believed nicotine was one of the

harmful components of cigarettes. Further, smokers who believed nicotine was harmful perceived their smoking as more risky ($p < 0.02$) and were less likely to intend to quit in the next 30 days ($p = 0.01$) than smokers who did not think that nicotine was harmful.

The clinical implication of these findings is that beliefs about the nature of nicotine may act as a barrier to tobacco cessation. When recommending NRT as a means to promote smoking cessation, it may be useful to make the following points: (1) NRT roughly doubles a smoker's chances of quitting successfully;⁵ (2) NRT is less addictive than cigarettes, so the smoker is not replacing one addiction with another;⁶ and (3) it is not the nicotine in cigarettes that makes them harmful, but the carbon monoxide, tar and other toxins.⁷

John A. Cunningham
Scientist
Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
Toronto, Ont.

Mécanisme de présentation des lettres

Le site amélioré des lettres du *JAMC* est désormais le portail de réception de tous les textes destinés à la chronique Lettres. Pour rédiger une lettre, consultez un article sur le site www.jamc.ca et cliquez ensuite sur le lien «Lettres électroniques : répondre à cet article», dans la boîte en haut à droite de l'article. Toutes les lettres seront étudiées pour une éventuelle publication dans le journal imprimé.

Les lettres répondant à un article publié dans le *JAMC* sont plus susceptibles d'être acceptées pour publication imprimée si elles sont présentées dans les deux mois de la date de publication de l'article. Les lettres acceptées pour publication imprimée sont révisées en fonction du style du *JAMC* et raccourcies au besoin (elles doivent habituellement compter au maximum 250 mots).

REFERENCES

1. Schroeder SA. What to do with a patient who smokes. *JAMA* 2005;294(4):482-7.
2. Etter JF, Perneger TV. Attitudes toward nicotine replacement therapy in smokers and ex-smokers in the general public. *Clin Pharmacol Ther* 2001;69(3):175-83.
3. Cummings KM, Hyland A, Giovino GA, et al. Are smokers adequately informed about the health risks of smoking and medicinal nicotine? *Nicotine Tob Res* 2004;6 Suppl 3:S333-40.
4. Bansal MA, Cummings KM, Hyland A, et al. Stop-smoking medications: Who uses them, who misuses them, and who is misinformed about them? *Nicotine Tob Res* 2004;6 Suppl 3:S303-10.
5. Silagy C, Lancaster T, Stead L, et al. Nicotine replacement therapy for smoking cessation [Cochrane review]. In: The Cochrane Library; Issue 3, 2004. Oxford (UK): Cochrane Collaboration.
6. Hughes JR. Motivating and helping smokers to stop smoking. *J Gen Intern Med* 2003;18(12):1053-7.
7. Benowitz NL. *Nicotine safety and toxicity*. New York: Oxford University Press; 1998.

DOI:10.1503/cmaj.1060136

Corrections

In a recent letter to the editor,¹ the second paragraph should have begun as follows: "Dr. Pijak [as opposed to Dr. Khan] raises several important issues...."

REFERENCE

1. Lee SS, Wong T. Hepatitis C: reviewing the options [letter]. *CMAJ* 2006;175(1):64.

DOI:10.1503/cmaj.060921

A recent News article¹ incorrectly stated the physician-to-population ratio. In fact Canada's ratio is 2.1 physicians to 1000 people. The *CMAJ* apologizes for any inconvenience this error may have caused.

REFERENCE

1. Kondro W, Sibbald B. CMA proposes options for the private-public split. *CMAJ* 2006;175(1):18-20.

DOI:10.1503/cmaj.060922