



MDs urged to refuse interviews because of company's tobacco policy

A Toronto physician says doctors should refuse interviews with *Health Watch*, a magazine published by Shoppers Drug Mart, because of the company's tobacco policies.

In a letter to the CMA, Dr. Donna Stewart said she has already refused several interviews with the publication and wants other physicians to do the same. Stewart, who holds the Lillian Love Chair in Women's Health at the Toronto Hospital and University of Toronto, said doctors should also let the company know why they are refusing the interviews. "I think if all physicians banded together and made it clear they were not prepared to cooperate with Shoppers Drug Mart because of its policy on tobacco marketing, this

would provide the company with some unwanted publicity," Stewart wrote.

Cynthia Callard, spokesperson for Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada, said Stewart's action is appropriate because Shoppers was "very strongly opposed" to recent Ontario legislation that banned the sale of tobacco in drugstores. She noted that the company is owned by Imasco, which also owns Imperial Tobacco Ltd., and said that even though Shoppers no longer sells tobacco products in Ontario because of the provincial legislation, it still sells them in other provinces.


"The fact that they have been legislated into compliance in 1 province doesn't give me much confidence," Stewart said in an interview.

medical care and as a core medical service. The association recently approved a policy that urges physicians to:

- routinely counsel children and young people against starting to smoke or chew tobacco;
- use illnesses such as respiratory problems as "teachable moments" that can be used to motivate patients to quit smoking;
- ask patients about their current smoking status and readiness to change; and


- offer personalized care to smokers, which may include setting a target date to quit and offering behavioural counselling and/or nicotine-replacement therapy.

Physicians surveyed by Health Canada said the major barriers to CTIs, aside from a lack of knowledge about billing codes and frustration with the success rate, are a lack of time to discuss smoking-related issues during a patient visit and the price of nicotine patches.?



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