



## Study Shows Full Eight-week Treatment with Nicotine Patches is Cost-effective

**SEATTLE, Wash., June 30, 2008** – According to a randomized trial conducted with callers to the Oregon Tobacco Quit Line, an eight-week course of treatment with nicotine patches is more effective helping people quit smoking than a two-week treatment. The study, sponsored by the Oregon Public Health Division and conducted by Free & Clear, Inc., a Seattle-based provider of tobacco cessation programs over the phone and Internet, will be published in the August *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.


As of 2006, more than 20 states reported some form of limited nicotine patch distribution through their state smoking quitline. All 50 states now provide telephone support to smokers interested in quitting, and this service has been proven to help smokers quit in dozens of clinical trials.<sup>1</sup> Because of limitations in state funding, some quitlines have been providing courses of nicotine patches that are considerably shorter than the manufacturer and U.S. Food and Drug Administration recommendations of eight to 12 weeks. This practice was justified in part based on the assumption that shorter courses would likely be as effective as longer courses.

This study is the first randomized trial to evaluate the relative benefits and cost effectiveness of short versus standard treatment. The study focused on uninsured callers, since this group has no recourse to health plan coverage to obtain more medication. The Free & Clear study found that 30-day abstinence at six months was 14.3 percent in the two-week group, and 19.6 percent in the eight-week group. Researchers at Kaiser Permanente's Center for Health Research analyzed the cost-effectiveness of the two interventions and found that the average cost per quit was \$1,156 for two weeks and \$1,405 for eight weeks. Smokers receiving eight weeks of patches increased their chances of success relative to those receiving two weeks by almost 50 percent. A smoker who quits adds six to 10 years to their life expectancy on average<sup>2</sup>. In addition, participant satisfaction rose from 90 percent with the two-week group to 97 percent with the eight-week group.

"Nicotine replacement therapy has been introduced into quitlines for two purposes: as a promotional aid to increase calls to quitlines, and also to improve quit rates," said Tim McAfee, MD, MPH, Free & Clear's Chief Medical Officer and lead author of the study. "Our analysis shows that providing an eight week course of nicotine replacement is a cost effective strategy, resulting in higher quit rates and higher satisfaction rates among participants." He added that, "the State of Oregon is to be commended both for providing

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<sup>1</sup> Quitlines: a toll for research and dissemination of evidence-based cessation practices. *Am J Prev Med* 2007;33(6S):S357-S367. <sup>2</sup> Doll R, Peto R, Boreham J, Sutherland I. Mortality in relation to smoking: 50 years' observations on male British doctors. *BMJ* 2004;1519.



an important service to an especially vulnerable group of smokers who otherwise would get no help quitting, and for supporting rigorous research to determine the best approach.”

The authors noted that, “despite the improved effectiveness of eight weeks of nicotine replacement therapy, specific policy objectives could justify providing two weeks rather than eight weeks.” Examples cited included a state wanting to encourage health plans to cover cessation medications, or wanting to support quit attempts by making some medication available to all callers despite not having enough funds to provide full treatment to all callers.

The study was conducted by Free & Clear, and sponsored by the Oregon Public Health Division, in collaboration with Kaiser Permanente’s Center for Health Research and Group Health Cooperative’s Center for Health Studies. Dr. McAfee and two coauthors also do research at Group Health in Seattle. The study randomized more than 1,000 uninsured callers to the Oregon Tobacco Quit Line during a free-patch initiative to receive either two weeks or eight weeks of patches, along with multiple counseling calls. The Oregon Tobacco Quit Line experienced a 20-fold increase in calls for help quitting during the first month.

**About Free & Clear, Inc.**

Free & Clear, Inc. is the nation’s leading provider of tobacco treatment services for health plans, employers, and government organizations. Free & Clear helps its clients improve their populations’ health and control related costs by reducing the prevalence of tobacco use. More than 50 million people have access to Free & Clear’s Quit For Life Program, whose proof of effectiveness has been published in multiple peer-reviewed, scientific journals over 20 years. Free & Clear is based in Seattle, Washington. Find more information at [www.freeclear.com](http://www.freeclear.com).

None of the institutions or individuals conducting this study received any payment from the nicotine patch manufacturers. The study was funded entirely by the State of Oregon, including the purchase of the patches.

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