

MEDIA RELEASE FROM THE CANCER ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA (CANSA)

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For immediate release

Deadly cigarette advertising aimed at girls

Tobacco use is the second cause of death globally (after hypertension) and is currently responsible for killing one in 10 adults worldwide. "Over 44 000 South Africans die from tobacco-related diseases annually and many more become ill from using tobacco products and inhaling second-hand smoke," says CANSA CEO, Sue Janse van Rensburg. "Smoking is the main cause of lung cancer – which has one of the lowest survival rates of all cancers. The good news is that most of these deaths are preventable by giving up smoking in time."

Women comprise about 20% of the world's 1 billion+ smokers, and the figures are rising. Women are a major target of opportunity for the tobacco industry, which needs to recruit new users to replace the nearly half of current users who will die prematurely from tobacco-related diseases. Especially troubling is the rising prevalence of tobacco use among girls.

Controlling the epidemic of tobacco among women is an important part of any comprehensive tobacco control strategy. World No Tobacco Day on 31 May 2010 draws particular attention to the harmful effects of tobacco marketing towards women and girls. It will also highlight the need for the nearly 170 Parties to the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control to ban all tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship in accordance with their constitutions or constitutional principles.

The new WHO report, *Women and health: today's evidence, tomorrow's agenda*, points to evidence that tobacco advertising increasingly targets girls. Data from 151 countries show that about 7% of adolescent girls smoke cigarettes as opposed to 12% of adolescent boys. In some countries, almost as many girls smoke as boys.

The WHO Framework Convention, which took effect in 2005, expresses alarm at "the increase in smoking and other forms of tobacco consumption by women and young girls worldwide". Although the World No Tobacco Day 2010 campaign will focus on tobacco marketing to women, it will also take into account the need to protect boys and men from the tobacco companies' tactics.

The WHO Framework Convention recognises "the need for gender-specific tobacco control strategies", as well as for the "full participation of women at all levels of [tobacco control] policy-making and implementation [of tobacco control measures]".

On World No Tobacco Day 2010, and throughout the following year, WHO will encourage governments to pay particular attention to protecting women from the tobacco companies' attempts to lure them into lifetimes of nicotine dependence. By responding to WHO's call, governments can reduce the toll of fatal and crippling heart attacks, strokes, cancers and respiratory diseases that have become increasingly prevalent among women.

Recognising the urgency of informing South Africans on how to make smart choices CANSA has launched its Kick Butt programme to help smokers quit the deadly habit and regain their lives. CANSA received the *WHO 2009 World No Tobacco Day Achievement Award* in recognition of its accomplishments in the fight against tobacco use in South Africa.

Worldwide, more than 5 million people die from tobacco each year – more than from HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined. Recognising the importance of reducing tobacco use among women, and acting upon that recognition, would save many lives.

About CANSA

CANSA offers a unique integrated service to the public and all people affected by cancer. As a leading role-player in cancer research (R4,5 million spent annually), the scientific findings and knowledge gained from our research are used to realign our health programmes as well as strengthen our watchdog role to the greater benefit of the public.

Our wide-reaching health programme includes prevention and education campaigns, patient care and support in the form of 11 Interim Homes and the main metropolitan areas plus one hospitiom (based in Polokwane) for out-of-town cancer patients, support centres that offer stoma and lymphoedema clinics, medical equipment hire, toll-free line and support to children and their families affected by cancer. CANSA gives out free Cancer Coping kits in English, seSotho, isiZulu and Afrikaans funded by the National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund.

For more information, please contact Mrs. Anke Nel, CANSA's Regional Manager, or email: anel@cansa.org.za, call 013 - 6565420 or cell: 082 568 0405. Or visit www.cansa.org.za or call CANSA toll-free 0800 22 66 22, or email: info@cansa.org.za

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