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**New Arizona Cancer Center grant targets networks to reduce tobacco use**

A new grant awarded to the Arizona Cancer Center at The University of Arizona will be used to study the North American Quitline Consortium (NAQC), an existing well-defined tobacco control network, with the goal of identifying best practices across its 62 quitlines – one in each of the 50 U.S. states, 10 Canadian provinces, Puerto Rico, and Washington D.C. The goal of the research is to identify and then implement best practices to help reduce the number of tobacco users, which has remained stagnant in recent years.

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of illness and death in the U.S., killing 430,000 Americans and costing the U.S. \$97.2 billion in health care and lost productivity every year. These statistics are widely known, yet more than one in five Americans continues to smoke.

Researchers at the Arizona Cancer Center, Eller College of Management, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences and others will analyze complex networks within a system that is designed to generate new knowledge about how to treat tobacco dependence and how translation and dissemination of information through that network can be improved. This study is an outgrowth of efforts at the National Cancer Institute to understand how developing more communication and collaboration among networks of people – scientists, clinicians, citizens - can lead to system changes that will foster improvements in cancer prevention and care.

While the analysis of networks to improve outcomes has been well established in the business community, military, and sciences such as physics and meteorology, scientific approaches that are designed to understand and improve networks to benefit public health are more recent. For example, network analyses have been central to understanding and preventing the spread of HIV and other communicable diseases. The outcomes of this study are expected to benefit not just efforts in tobacco control, but also the broader public health field.

Scott Leischow, PhD, professor in the College of Medicine and associate director in the Arizona Cancer Center, is the grant's principal investigator. Dr. Leischow is an expert in smoking cessation and serves as president of the Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco, the premiere worldwide scientific organization dedicated to tobacco control research. He previously served for five years in the federal government as chief of the Tobacco Control Research Branch at the National Cancer Institute, and as senior advisor for tobacco policy in the Office of the Secretary of Health and Human Services. Dr. Leischow is also co-editor of a 2007 NCI Monograph entitled *Greater than Sum: Systems Thinking in Tobacco Control*.

"As we pointed out in our NCI Monograph *Greater than the Sum*," it is essential that we better understand how new knowledge is gained and shared by different disciplines of scientists, and how we can improve the integration of research and practice," said Dr. Leischow. "By understanding and improving how networks of people can work together toward a common goal, the benefits to society are greater than the sum of what individuals can do separately."

Keith Provan, PhD, McClelland Professor in the School of Public Administration and Policy at the Eller College and well-known expert on social and organizational networks, will collaborate with Dr. Leischow on the grant. Dr. Provan explained that one focus will be the impact of local decision making.

"Certain networks are more effective than others. We want to know why," he said. "We will examine the impact of decision making and communication at every level across the network."

The grant will approach \$3 million over a five-year period. It is awarded by the National Cancer Institute.

*The Arizona Cancer Center is the state's premier National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer center. With primary locations at the University of Arizona in Tucson and in Scottsdale, the*

*Center has more than a dozen research and education offices throughout the state and 300 physician and scientist members working to prevent and cure cancer. For more information, go to [www.azcc.arizona.edu](http://www.azcc.arizona.edu)*