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AHRQ News and Numbers

Data from 2004 show that approximately 4 of every 10 adults who had emphysema—a serious, often fatal disease associated with smoking—said that they still smoked. Americans with other serious illnesses also hadn't kicked the habit when surveyed. These included: asthma sufferers (23 percent), stroke victims (23 percent), people with high blood pressure (17 percent), people with cardiovascular problems (17 percent), and people with diabetes (17 percent). [Source: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, [MEPS](#).]

Today's Headlines:

1. [New AHRQ asthma care resource guide offers help to States](#)
2. [New Surgeon General's Report Focuses on the Effects of Secondhand Smoke](#)
3. [AHRQ selects members for composite measures workgroup](#)
4. [New program brief on AHRQ research on obesity and overweight](#)
5. [AHRQ audio newscast highlights studies on antivirals for flu and drugs for osteoporosis](#)
6. [AHRQ joins the SOS Rx Coalition to launch new public education campaign on safe warfarin use](#)
7. [AHRQ's MEPS Data Users' Workshop set for July 24-25](#)
8. [Call for abstracts for Building Bridges Conference set for November 1-3](#)
9. [AHRQ in the professional literature](#)

1. New AHRQ Asthma Care Resource Guide Offers Help To States

AHRQ, in partnership with The Council of State Governments, released *Asthma Care Quality Improvement: A Resource Guide for State Action* and its companion *Workbook*. Both are designed to help State leaders identify measures of asthma care quality, assemble data on asthma care, assess areas of care most in need of improvement, learn what other States have done to improve asthma care, and develop a plan for improving the quality of care for their States. This new *Resource Guide* uses data from AHRQ's *National Healthcare Quality Report* and *National Healthcare Disparities Report* and Web-based *State Snapshots* to help inform the Nation and States, respectively, about the quality of asthma care. Select to view the [guide and workbook](#) and select to read our [press release](#). A print copy is available by sending an e-mail to ahrqpubs@ahrq.hhs.gov.

[Back to Headlines](#)

2. New Surgeon General's Report Focuses on the Effects of Secondhand Smoke

This week, U.S. Surgeon General Richard H. Carmona issued a comprehensive scientific report that concludes there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke. The report, *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke*, finds that even brief secondhand smoke exposure can cause immediate harm. The finding is of major public health concern because nearly half of all nonsmoking Americans are still regularly exposed to secondhand smoke. Nonsmokers exposed to secondhand smoke at home or work increase their risk of developing heart disease by 25 percent to 30 percent and lung cancer by 20 percent to 30 percent. The report says the only way to protect nonsmokers from the dangerous chemicals in secondhand smoke is to eliminate smoking indoors. Smoke-free indoor environments are proven, simple approaches that prevent exposure and harm. Copies of the Surgeon General's [report](#) and related materials are available on AHRQ's Web site. Additional resources on the Web site include evidence-based information on quitting tobacco use from the PHS Guideline: *Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence*. Visit [AHRQ's Web site](#) for more information.

[Back to Headlines](#)

3. AHRQ Selects Members for Composite Measures Workgroup

AHRQ has selected 17 experts to serve on the AHRQ Quality Indicators Composite Measures Workgroup for its Inpatient Quality Indicators and Patient Safety Indicators. The workgroup plans to identify a composite methodology that would meet the needs of various stakeholders for public reporting. This work is expected to occur this summer; a final report will be made publicly available in the fall. Members of the workgroup include **John Birkmeyer, M.D.**, University of Michigan; **Bruce Boissonnault**, Niagara Health Quality Coalition; **John Bott**, Employer Health Care Alliance Cooperative; **Dale Bratzler, Ph.D.**, Oklahoma Foundation for Medical Quality; **Sharon Cheng**, MedPAC; **Elizabeth Clough**, Wisconsin Collaborative for Healthcare Quality; **Nancy Dunton**, University of Kansas School of Nursing; **John Hoerner**, Hospital Industry Data Institute; **David Hopkins**, Pacific Business Group on Health; **Gregg Meyer, M.D.**, Massachusetts General Physicians Organization; **Elizabeth Mort**, Massachusetts General; **Janet Muri**, National Perinatal Information Center; **Vi Naylor**, Georgia Hospital Association; **Eric Peterson, M.D.**, Duke University Medical Center; **Martha Radford, M.D.**, New York University Hospitals Center; **Gulzar Shah**, National Association of Health Data Organizations; and **Paul Turner**, Vermont Program for Quality in Health Care. An additional 13 experts will serve as liaison members and technical advisors. Select to read the [announcement](#), which includes the complete list of members.

[Back to Headlines](#)

4. New Program Brief on AHRQ Research on Obesity and Overweight

AHRQ released a new program brief that summarizes findings from current and completed projects focused on obesity and overweight. Select to read the [program brief](#). A print copy is available by sending an e-mail to ahrqpubs@ahrq.hhs.gov.

[Back to Headlines](#)

5. AHRQ Audio Newscast Highlights Studies on Antivirals for Flu and Drugs for Osteoporosis

AHRQ's latest audio newscast features an interview with Dr. Jeffrey Linder discussing his AHRQ-funded research on the use of antivirals to treat the flu. The study found that these medicines can reduce hospitalizations and death from the flu, but primary care doctors only prescribe them to about 15 percent of their patients with the flu, and about 30 percent of the time prescribe them inappropriately. The 10 ½ -minute newscast also highlights a study comparing the cost-

effectiveness of two drugs to treat severe osteoporosis in women. Statistics about hospitalizations among men also are featured. Select to listen to the [newscast](#). If your computer has a sound card and speakers and can play MP3 audio files, you will be able to listen to the latest newscast on your computer at your convenience—according to your schedule, whenever you have time to listen. Visit the main page of our [Healthcare 411](#) series to access any of AHRQ's Newscasts and Special Reports. Sign up for a free subscription to the series to receive notice of all future AHRQ podcasts automatically.

[Back to Headlines](#)

6. AHRQ Joins the SOS Rx Coalition to Launch New Public Education Campaign on Safe Warfarin Use

The SOS Rx coalition, a group that includes the National Consumers League, AARP, AHRQ, FDA, CMS, and more than 80 other public- and private-sector groups, recently launched www.mybloodthinner.org as part of a new public education campaign to help the 4 million Americans taking prescription blood thinners to prevent stroke, blood clot formation, and other serious events. To help in the effort, AHRQ developed a new booklet for patients called [My Guide to Coumadin®/Warfarin Therapy](#). The easy-to-read booklet tells patients what to expect, what to watch for, and what to do while taking the blood-thinning medication. Supported by an AHRQ Partnerships for Implementing Patient Safety grant, the booklet was developed by a team led by James Levett, M.D., and his colleagues at Kirkwood Community College and the Cedar Rapids Healthcare Alliance in Iowa. Select for more information on the [SOS Rx campaign and recent survey findings](#).

[Back to Headlines](#)

7. AHRQ's MEPS Data Users' Workshop Set for July 24-25

AHRQ is conducting a 2-day workshop to facilitate the use of the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey Household Component by the health services research community. The workshop, designed for those with an interest in using national health surveys, will be held at the Eisenberg Building, 540 Gaither Road, Rockville, MD. Participants will have the opportunity to bring up specific research questions. The focus of the workshop will be health care utilization, expenditures, and medical conditions. Select to [register](#) and for more information. In addition, there will an overview presentation on [HCUP](#) (Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project) data.

[Back to Headlines](#)

8. Call for Abstracts for Building Bridges Conference Set for November 1-3

Abstracts are being sought for the 2006 Medical Leadership Forum: *Building Bridges Between Operations, Medical Practice, and Health Services Research*, cosponsored by America's Health Insurance Plans and AHRQ on November 1-3 in Phoenix, AZ. The deadline has been extended until July 12. Select to submit your [abstract](#) and to find more information about the conference. Questions? Please email slentz@ahip.org.

[Back to Headlines](#)

9. AHRQ in the Professional Literature

We are providing the following hyperlinks to journal abstracts through PubMed® for your convenience. Unfortunately, some of you may not be able to access the abstracts because of

firewalls or specific settings on your individual computer systems. If you are having problems, you should ask your technical support staff for possible remedies.

Lambert BL, Lin SJ, Tan H. Designing safe drug names. *Drug Saf* 2005;28(6):495-512. Select to read the [abstract](#) in PubMed®.

Bian J, Dow WH, Matchar DB. Medicare HMO penetration and mortality outcomes of ischemic stroke. *Am J Manag Care* 2006 Jan; 12(1):58-64. Select to read the [abstract](#) in PubMed®.

Sloane PD, Callahan L, Kahwati L, et al. Development of a practice-based patient cohort for primary care research. *Fam Med* 2006 Jan; 38(1):50-57. Select to read the [abstract](#) in PubMed®.

Tsai AC, Votruba M, Bridges JF, et al. Overcoming bias in estimating the volume-outcome relationship. *Health Serv Res* 2006 Feb; 41(1):252-264. Select to read the [abstract](#) in PubMed®.

Paliwal P, Gelfand AE, Abraham L, et al. Examining accuracy of screening mammography using an event order model. *Stat Med* 2006 Jan 30; 25(2):267-283. Select to read the [abstract](#) in PubMed®.

[Back to Headlines](#)

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