

European Respiratory Society Annual Congress 2012

Abstract Number: 853

Publication Number: 4517

Abstract Group: 6.3. Tobacco, Smoking Control and Health Education

Keyword 1: Smoking **Keyword 2:** COPD - management **Keyword 3:** Public health

Title: Earthquake rattled Christchurch residents reach for cigarettes

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Body: The magnitude 7.1 Canterbury earthquake in September 2010 and associated aftershocks have caused untold damage, drastically changed residents' living, working, social conditions and taken the lives of 184 people. Aim: To assess the impact of the Christchurch earthquakes on changes in smoking status and tobacco consumption of current smokers. Methods: Semi-structured interviews in public locations with high pedestrian flow, including two city malls and the central bus exchange. The interviews were carried out 15 months after the first major earthquake. A total of 1001 people were interviewed. Results: At the August 2010 point (prior to any earthquakes) 589 (58.9%) had smoked cigarettes or tobacco at some point in their lives; 400 (40.9%) never smoked and three participants (0.3%) were not sure. Of the 319 people who were not smoking in August 2010, 76 (23.8%) had smoked at least one cigarette since the September earthquake, 29 (38.2%) of whom had smoked more than 100 cigarettes. Of the 273 participants smoking in August 2010, 86 (31.5%) had since decreased consumption, 94 (34.4%) had not changed, deletion and 93 (34.1%) had increased consumption. Of the 86 people who decreased, six (7.0%) attributed the earthquake and subsequent lifestyle as a reason to reduce smoking. Of the 93 people who increased, 53 (57.0%) attributed the earthquake and subsequent lifestyle changes as a reason to increase smoking. Conclusion: The prevalence of smoking in Christchurch has increased in the 15 months following the first major quake in Sept 2010. 28% of people not smoking prior to the earthquakes smoked one or more cigarettes and people smoking prior to the earthquakes increased their consumption.