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## Is your hospital inspiring patients to stop smoking?

Get inspired by this anti-smoking campaign from Finland.

By Michael Burton | Posted: June 7, 2011

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Doctors and hospital staff know first-hand the dangers of smoking. Ninety percent of all cases of lung cancer are caused by smoking, and more than two-thirds of lung cancer cases are not diagnosed until they are in the latter stages, when it's often too late.

That's why some anti-smoking campaigns target young teens, who are lured by glitzy ads and celebrities who smoke. One in five U.S. teens smoke, says the U.S. Centers for Disease Control.

A volunteer for VOICE, a youth-led tobacco movement based in Indiana, says that many teens "look up to the different entertainers, like Young Jeezy and Beyonce. If you look up to them and they're smoking, then you're going to want to smoke, too." (See "Celebrities complicate anti-smoking effort here").

Even popular children's movies are seen by some as glamorizing smoking. Anti-smoking activists are railing about the amount of smoking in the animated movie "Rango," which has at least 60 instances of animal characters smoking in the movie, says Breathe California, a non-profit anti-smoking organization. Some fear that kids will want to take up smoking after seeing the movie.

Many hospitals and other health care organizations participated in the World Health Organization's

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"World No Tobacco Day" on May 31, by holding activities, discussions, and exhibits on the dangers of tobacco. Some organizations use celebrities as their spokespeople to warn teens about the hazards of smoking.

British comedian Ricky Gervais has joined a line of celebrities who are showing support to help increase awareness of lung cancer. In a campaign sponsored by the Roy Castle Lung Foundation, Gervais is urging people to stop smoking or get checked out by their primary care physician, if they have a cough that lasts more than two weeks.

Yet using celebrities in anti-smoking campaigns rarely resonates with viewers, says Steve Hamill of the [World Lung Foundation](#). "Time and again, tobacco control social marketing research has shown that celebrities may draw attention to anti-smoking campaigns, but they aren't as good at convincing people to quit smoking, compared with ads that graphically depict the health harms of tobacco use," Hamill says.

In Finland, an advertising agency has created a new way to reach teens without celebrities lecturing to them: Belittle (or "burn") those celebrities who do smoke. The agency produced a celebrity gossip magazine called "Burn," complete with entertaining and interesting stories about celebs, while at the same time featuring anti-smoking messages and health columns. To make it look just like a gossip magazine, the agency sold ad space to businesses that advertised in popular gossip and celebrity magazines.

Intended to be a one-shot run, the [magazine](#) was such a smash hit among Finnish teens that the agency produced three more. Topics included child labor in tobacco plantations, animal suffering due to second-hand smoke, and what different religions think about smoking.

So instead of recruiting celebrity spokespersons to lecture to teens about the dangers of smoking, perhaps a more interesting and effective way for your next anti-smoking campaign would be to razz those celebrities who flaunt smoking.

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