

RESEARCH NEWS

Myocardial infarctions fall by a third after smoking banned in workplaces

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The incidence of myocardial infarction fell by a third in one US community when all bars and other workplaces became smoke-free. Researchers tracking cardiovascular events through an existing epidemiology project in Olmsted County, Minnesota, recorded 150.8 myocardial infarctions per 100 000 population during the 18 months before any workplace ban in 2002 versus 100.7 per 100 000 in the 18 months after a full ban enacted in 2007 (adjusted relative risk 0.67, 95% CI 0.53 to 0.83). The incidence of sudden cardiac death fell too, but not significantly.

The researchers looked for but failed to find any shift in coronary risk factors other than smoking between their study periods. Their main analyses were adjusted for age and sex. A ban on smoking in the workplace may well have contributed to

the favourable trend in incidence of myocardial infarction, they write. Some smokers quit after workplace bans and others smoke less. Everyone inhales less secondhand smoke.

The new study adds to substantial and growing evidence that bans on smoking in the workplace help protect the public from the toxic effects of tobacco, says a linked editorial (doi:10.1001/2013.jamainternmed.269). We now have compelling observations from at least 15 cities in eight countries. Clean air laws work and should be expanded to include public spaces outside, such as parks, and private indoor spaces, such as cars.

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