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Pubs officially hailed as a breath of fresh air in report

Kathy Donaghy

RESEARCH to be unveiled tomorrow, on the first anniversary of the smoking ban, will show the quality of air in pubs is now radically clear of carcinogenic substances caused by cigarette smoke.

The results – to be unveiled at a symposium in Dublin tomorrow – are set to show the ban introduced to protect workers from the effects of secondhand smoke has done what it set out to do.

Luke Clancy, professor of respiratory medicine at Trinity College Dublin and director general of the Institute for a Tobacco Free Society, who will present the groundbreaking research findings, said while the results were preliminary, they were encouraging.

One of the substances researchers looked at for the study was the presence of benzene, a carcinogenic substance caused by lit cigarettes as well as the presence of carbon monoxide.

Prof Clancy said it was much too early to see if instances of diseases like cancer were decreasing, but researchers had been able to look at the acute effects of smoke including wheezing, weeping eyes and running noses.

They conducted tests pre- and post-ban with the same cohort of workers in the same day of the week in the same month of the year to rule out any seasonal adjustments. The findings of this research will also be revealed tomorrow. In his role as chairman of anti-smoking lobby group ASH, Prof Clancy said the anecdotal evidence to date was that the ban had dramatically improved the quality of people's lives.

"I have people coming to me saying their lives have been transformed. I have people saying they could never go into a pub before and now they can," he said.

While Prof Clancy said he believed the ban meant people would smoke less and that it would mean people would give up smoking, "It will encourage people to give up smoking and the ban will enable people not to start. A lot of it starts in pubs – smoking and drinking are linked and this breaks the link," Prof Clancy said.

According to the ASH chairman, an international study currently being conducted by the International Tobacco Control was already seeing an increase in the number of smokers who are in favour of the ban since it was introduced a year ago.

Meanwhile, scientists in London last week reported that Philip Morris, the world's largest tobacco manufacturer, was involved in research into the health effects of tobacco smoke 30 years ago but did not reveal its findings.

Researchers said material from internal industry documents revealed Philip Morris used a German research facility to study the health impact of smoking from the early 1970s.

"Arrangements were made to conceal the process," Martin McKee of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine said in research published online by the Lancet Medical Journal.

"In particular, the unpublished reports provided evidence that secondhand smoke is even more harmful than mainstream smoke – a finding of particular relevance given the industry's continuing denial of the harmful effects of passive smoking," Mr KcKee said in the journal.

The parent company of Philip Morris said the allegations in the journal were not new and had been made in many product liability lawsuits filed against the tobacco manufacturer.

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