

The editorial that ran in the Forum last week was in the Sun today as well.

Letter to the editor: The cost of secondhand smoke is too high

Eric L. Johnson, MD, Grand Forks, The Jamestown Sun

Published Tuesday, February 10, 2009

As a medical doctor, I've treated patients who have suffered from the effects of secondhand smoke. These patients are being treated for life-threatening diseases including heart disease, emphysema, stroke, SIDS and cancer. Let me assure you, there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.

I want to help protect my patients and families like them across the state by preventing exposure to this deadly contaminant. Treating the diseases caused by secondhand smoke contributes greatly to the mounting cost of health care — and all these diseases can be readily prevented. It is time to stop the damage tobacco smoke does to our bodies and to our entire health care system by passing House Bill 1213. Indoor clean air legislation does not specifically target the smoker; it targets the infliction of injury on others. Secondhand smoke kills approximately 40,000 people in the U.S. annually.

North Dakota needs to join the other states that have already eliminated secondhand smoke exposure from all workplaces. The result will be reduced hospital admissions for tobacco-related illnesses, and reduced health care costs for everyone.

The costs of secondhand smoke are simply too high, and the time for change is now!

Eric L. Johnson, MD

Grand Forks