

PUTTING THE HEALTH – BACK IN HEALTHCARE

[Healthcare] - Efforts made to maintain or restore health, especially by trained and licensed professionals. (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

It saddens me to find that many healthcare facilities in the State of Louisiana do not try harder to live by this very simple definition. Through the depths of our own chaotic lives, we as a society seem determined to forget those around us.

With substantial smoke-free legislation that was recently passed by the state legislature, you would think that our hospitals and healthcare facilities would be the first on board to embrace such an important message. This however, is not the case. Although there are facilities trying to make the right choice with respect to providing clean air for their patients and visitors, too many are still caught in the realm of the unconcerned and feel that banning smoking indoors is the easiest way to just “do their part.” This sort of mindset needs to be altered.

Let me ask you this, when was the last time you walked into a hospital waiting room and found yourself taken aback by cigarette smoke? Unless we are talking about the 1960’s, not too recently I suppose. How about the last time you walked past an emergency room door or the front entrance of a healthcare facility, were you pleased with the atmosphere? Of course not and let me guess why – there was a huddled mass of smokers, puffing away with no regard for the noxious fumes that they were releasing upon your defenseless lungs. This type of atmosphere helps contribute to what we now know claims 53,800 lives each year from secondhand smoke exposure and where we find ourselves in today’s Louisiana.

For those of you out there that claim smoking is the right of that particular citizen, you are correct. But when exercising that right inherently makes a decision for us all – why does my right not to smoke become seemingly less important?

As the organization of Americans for Nonsmokers Rights declares, “Healthcare professionals are an important component of every smoke-free air campaign. Doctors, dentists, nurses, dental hygienists, and healthcare students not only have a shared interest in promoting and protecting public health, but many are also are well-known and well-respected within their communities.”

Let us work together to promote smoke-free healthcare campuses across the state. Not to punish those who smoke, but to save those of us who don’t.

###

Michael P. Calabro, Project Director
Operation Against Smoking/Inhaling Secondhand Smoke (OASIS) Initiative
Louisiana Rural Health Association
(985)369.3813

