

pollution at the entrances of buildings. A particularly unpleasant and inappropriate situation was described recently by a smoking cessation counsellor at one of the country's top teaching hospitals. Smoke from the many smokers packed into the entrance area at any one time—staff, patients and visitors—and the mass of litter they left behind, was not only denying other staff a smoke-free workplace, but was manifestly unpleasant for the smokers themselves.

The counsellor suggested that the hospital set up a temporary smoking room, coupled with the offer and provision of cessation counselling for those who used it. Despite a promise that the situation would be remedied—it had been the subject of other complaints—it took adverse publicity in a national newspaper to produce action. The hospital authorities announced a separate area for

smokers, though there was no mention of linking this with cessation services.

Clearly, such a measure must only be an interim stage on the way to a completely smoke-free environment. It illustrates the difficulties that many countries face, especially if there has not been steady preparation over many years, using public information and education campaigns, to create a genuinely smoke-free culture.

North Korea: singular aim of smoking ban

We all know of countries that owe their smoking bans mainly to one individual. It is usually a health minister, often a physician who has seen all too much of the clinical results of smoking, who persuades fellow ministers to back a tobacco control bill, and has the dedication, political skills and courage, not to

mention the energy to see it through the inevitable media and parliamentary storms thrown up by tobacco interests before it finally becomes law. North Korea now has a smoking ban, not mainly but entirely due to the influence of one individual, and not for the usual reasons. Although detailed information does not flow too easily from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as it is officially called, it has been reported that doctors recommended to president Kim Jong-il that he stop smoking (as well as drinking alcohol) and arrange to live and work in a totally smoke-free environment. Thus the home, office and everywhere else visited by Kim Jong-Il, chairman of the national defence commission, supreme commander of the Korean people's army and general secretary of the workers' party of Korea, have been made smoke free.

The Lighter Side



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