



**MEDIA RELEASE**

**ADAVB WELCOMES GOVERNMENT'S CIGARETTE WARNING PLAN  
ORAL CANCER AN UNRECOGNISED RISK!**

Dr. Vlad Hardi, President of the Victorian Branch of the Australian Dental Association (ADAVB) today welcomed the announcement by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing, Trish Worth, that the Commonwealth Government will require cigarette packaging to carry graphic warnings of the disease consequences of smoking, including oral cancers.

Oral cancers include those affecting the tongue, lips, cheeks and soft palette, and when statistics for all such cancers are combined, they result in more deaths each year than cervical cancer.

Figures provided by the Cancer Epidemiology Centre at the Cancer Council of Victoria indicate that lip cancers are the most common oral cancers, while the highest mortality results from cancers of the tongue.

The incidence of oral cancer increases with age and represents 6.5 per cent of the new cases of cancer in Victoria (Cancer Council of Victoria, 2000). In 2000, 450 Victorians were diagnosed with lip and oral cavity cancers. Seventy-two of these people died. This compares with 150 Victorians diagnosed with cervical cancer, of whom 52 died (a figure likely to have been reduced due to effective screening programs). Early detection through opportunistic screening, such as occurs in regular dental examinations, offers a simple way to identify those at high risk and to develop an appropriate management response.

When taking a patient's medical history one of the key questions dentists ask is whether they smoke, and if so how much. Smokers are also much more likely to suffer from periodontal (gum) disease, which can be treated, and is less likely to reoccur if the patient quits smoking.

Dentists routinely examine the soft tissues of the lips and mouth when conducting comprehensive oral examinations. Where they see signs of oral lesions that may be cancerous or pre-cancerous, they often refer the patient for biopsy testing and specialist care.

Research shows that smoking and alcohol are important risk factors in the development of oral cancers. Over 80 per cent of these cancers occur in people who smoke cigarettes, cigars or pipes. Heavy drinkers are also at increased risk. People who drink heavily and smoke are at greater risk again - one of the key reasons why the ADAVB has been working in partnership with QUIT Victoria to provide smoking cessation training to dentists so they can better assist their patients.

“The Government must be congratulated on plans to introduce graphic health warnings on cigarette packaging. The public may be aware of lung and throat cancers, and even some other serious cancer risks associated with smoking, but there has been little recognition of the risk of oral cancers, which can be just as deadly” Dr Hardi said.

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**For more information, or to arrange an interview with an ADAVB spokesperson, please contact:**

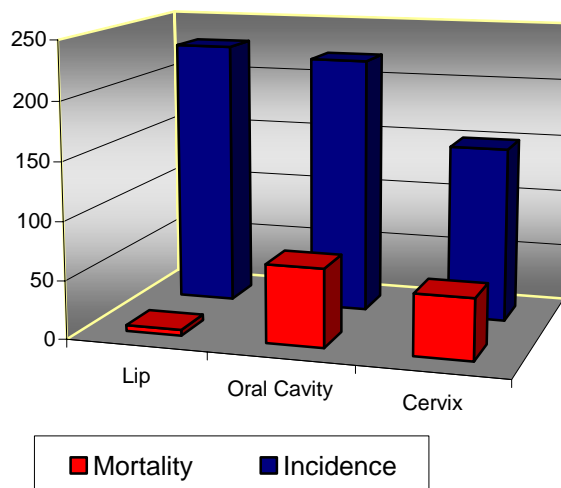
Sarah Harvie or Rhys Ryan at Porter Novelli on:

Phone: (03) 9289 9599

Mobile: 0402 217 956 or 0408 527 873

Email: sharvie@prworks.com.au or rryan@prworks.com.au

**Oral and Cervical Cancer in Victoria  
2000**



Source: The Cancer Council of Victoria  
Epidemiology Centre, 2002

	Mortality	Incidence
Lip	5	229
Oral Cavity	67	221
Cervix	52	150