

# Featured Nurse Leader

## Cynthia Hornberger, RN, MBA, PhD

### Arming nurses with knowledge and skill

Joining the Tobacco Free Nurses leadership initiative was a natural fit for the Dean of Washburn University School of Nursing, Cynthia Hornberger, RN, MBA, PhD. If Dr. Hornberger could have things her way, every single nurse would be trained in smoking cessation counseling. She has worked with other faculty members at Washburn School of Nursing, particularly Lori Edwards, RN, MSN, to make sure that the curricula for both undergraduate and graduate nursing students include smoking cessation education. Now, she is working to ensure that other schools follow suit. To meet this challenge, Washburn University in 2004 hosted three train-the-trainer workshops for faculty members from schools of nursing in Kansas to become familiar with smoking cessation curricula and useful teaching strategies. Dr. Hornberger has made important contributions to improving education about tobacco cessation in Kansas, and is a model for others to follow.



Dr. Hornberger's deep commitment to smoking cessation originates from her clinical nursing experience caring for patients with heart failure. During ten years as an emergency room nurse, she was a first-hand witness to the devastating effects of smoking. Time after time, she was confronted with patients with heart failure whose smoking complicated management of their disease. These experiences led to her to "seek solutions that are at the other end of the continuum" where she believed she could make greater impact. Therefore, she went back to graduate school to pursue degrees in health promotion. She was inspired by Dr. Kathy Rowe's work in Irish nursing schools on knowledge of and attitudes towards smoking among nursing students. She decided to do similar work in the United States with the aim of getting nursing schools to address tobacco addiction as a primary cause of disease. She and Ms. Edwards started by assessing knowledge of, attitude towards, and prevalence of smoking at her own school. Then, she got faculty members at her school involved in upgrading the Nursing School's curriculum to ensure that all nurses educated at the school had the skill necessary to implement smoking cessation.

Dr. Hornberger contends that most nurses are aware of the harmful effects of cigarette smoking and the importance of smoking cessation but, "knowing the importance of smoking cessation is not equivalent to knowing what to do about the smoking cessation." She sees nurses as the natural group of professionals to implement smoking cessation because patients trust them. She goes on to add that, "smoking cessation is difficult, therefore the trust factor that nurses bring is crucial in getting patients to quit smoking. Resources are needed to help nurses achieve their potential in smoking cessation." She and Ms. Edwards have used the Rx for Change, a well-established curriculum developed at the University of California San Francisco. Her goal is to use this excellent curricular resource to "arm nurses with knowledge and skill."

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