



## INTRODUCTION

# Smoking cessation: a clinical update

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**T**obacco smoking constitutes one of the major risk factors for several pulmonary and cardiovascular diseases, and also a lot of other disease entities. As a consequence, it is imperative that smoking cessation represents one of the best treatment options for a lot of these diseases. All health workers and especially smokers themselves realise that it is very difficult to quit smoking, although recently a lot of newer pharmacological and nonpharmacological treatment options have become available.

The purpose of the international symposium "Smoking cessation: a clinical update", organised by the Dept of Respiratory Diseases of the University Hospital Gasthuisberg at the Katholieke Universiteit (Leuven, Belgium) on March 8–10, 2007, which forms the subject of the current issue of the *European Respiratory Review*, was to provide a clinical update of several issues regarding the health effects of smoking and the necessity of smoking cessation. Various clinical and basic researchers and internationally renowned experts in the field were brought together from all over Europe to discuss various topics related to the health consequences of smoking and to smoking cessation.

In the first chapter, BALFOUR [1] describes the psychobiology of nicotine dependence, in particular emphasising that nicotine possesses all the rewarding and reinforcing properties of an addictive drug. The second chapter, by VINEIS [2], deals with the impact of smoking on health, especially on cancer and cardiovascular disease. In the third chapter, CORNUZ and WILLI [3] describe nonpharmacological smoking cessation interventions in clinical practice, such as specific counselling to inform and sensitise the smoker and to motivate and support them to quit smoking. The next chapter deals with the specific pharmacological treatments to help in smoking cessation, and in this chapter FAGERSTRÖM and JIMÉNEZ-RUIZ [4] describe the role of nicotine

replacement therapy on the one hand, and of bupropion and varenicline on the other. In the fifth chapter, WEST and STAPLETON [5] describe the clinical and public health significance of treatments to aid smoking cessation, and in the final chapter the implications and priorities for tobacco control in Belgium and Europe are discussed by BARTSCH [6].

We hope that this issue of the *European Respiratory Review* will provide an interesting synthesis and update of the current knowledge on why and how to deal with smoking cessation.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors are very grateful to M. Humbert, Editor-in-Chief Elect, for granting them the privilege of publishing the international symposium "Smoking cessation: a clinical update" in the *European Respiratory Review*. The authors would especially like to thank GlaxoSmithKline, Belgium for the unrestricted grant which allowed us to organise the international symposium in Leuven, Belgium.

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## STATEMENT OF INTEREST

K. Nackaerts has received an educational grant from Pfizer, and a fee for consultancy from Pfizer.  
M. Decramer has received a fee for speaking and reimbursement for attending a symposium.