

Hospital, Heal Thyself: North Carolina Hospitals Make Prevention a Priority to Support Health of their Workforce, Patients, and Communities

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Tobacco use and obesity are the leading causes of preventable illness and death in North Carolina. More than one in five adults still smoke in North Carolina, and two-thirds of adults are overweight or obese. This leads to earlier and more acute health effects and mortality, including thousands of premature deaths in the state. In fact, North Carolinians' life expectancy is two years less than the national average.

The cost of tobacco use and obesity-related illness is staggering—North Carolina employers can expect to spend at least \$5,700 more in health care costs per employee (see Figure 1).¹ While employers have clear financial reasons and are in a unique position to support healthy behaviors, only 7% of workplaces nationwide meet the Healthy People 2010 objective of establishing comprehensive, evidence-based wellness practices.²

North Carolina hospitals are at the forefront of supporting healthy behaviors by establishing evidence-based workplace prevention policies, environments, and systems through the Healthy NC Hospitals Initiative. The Initiative is a collaboration between NC Prevention Partners (NCP), the North Carolina Hospital Association, The Duke Endowment, and the leadership and boards of trustees of 125 acute care hospitals. Through the Initiative, North Carolina hospitals have become national leaders in an ambitious wellness effort to support tobacco-free and healthy weight employees, and then to extend prevention into patient care systems. The scale of this initiative is remarkable: North Carolina's 125 acute care hospitals are located in nearly every county, employ over 200,000 workers, welcome thousands of visitors each day, provide more than 15 million patient encounters each year, and are key community health leaders.

With support and guidance from NC Prevention Partners, a statewide nonprofit organization, all of North Carolina's hospitals established 100% tobacco-free campuses between July 2006 and July 2009, an accomplishment that attracted national attention. The Healthy Food Phase began in 2008 and is actively working statewide to support access

to healthy food and employ other strategies to encourage consumer behavior changes in the hospitals. In 2009, NCP began developing a comprehensive tobacco cessation model for hospital employees and patients.

This work would not be possible without the full support and generous funding of The Duke Endowment. At the onset of the project in 2006, with the involvement of The Duke Endowment, NCP project staff was able to start the conversation and attract the attention and interest of hospital leaders. Additionally, the partnership with the North Carolina Hospital Association was critical to the success of the project, providing leadership and endorsement of the Initiative and making their communication resources available.

Developing Comprehensive and Effective Tobacco and Obesity Prevention Strategies

NCP supports North Carolina hospitals in developing their capacity and leadership for evidence-based tobacco and obesity prevention systems. Each initiative has its own Centers of Excellence, hospitals that are clear leaders in the effort and are willing to publicly share their story and assist others. They are diverse in geographic location and size. Developing the evidence-based and practice-tested models involves literature reviews, applied theory, national and state expertise, and testing among the state's leading hospitals. Each phase comes with a comprehensive policy and environmental change model (see Table 1, page 98).

Using Dissemination Theory to Promote Statewide Adoption

NCP uses Oldenburg and Parcel's theory of diffusion of innovations³ to guide the statewide adoption of wellness policy, including gaining executive commitment and guiding hospitals through stages of implementation. There are several core elements throughout the implementation process:

- Strategic partnerships include NCP's critical relationship with the North Carolina Hospital Association, The Duke

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Endowment, national tobacco and obesity prevention experts, food industry partners, hospital CEOs, and health care providers.

- Detailed and tailored technical assistance, including site visits, webinars, trainings, action planning, and case studies.
- The innovative and comprehensive WorkHealthy America, including an assessment tool, a 90-question survey on tobacco, nutrition, and physical activity wellness policies; generating a grade per section; tailored benchmarks for improvement; and access to tools and resources.
- Map of implementation progress helps hospitals fuel efforts based on friendly competition and a desire to be part of a statewide movement (see Figure 2, page 99).
- Statewide and public celebration, including annual awards ceremony, media assistance, and letters sent directly to executives to applaud leadership.

Ensuring Hospital Commitment to Wellness

In making the case that the proposed policy is better than the current one, NCPP highlights health care savings of prevention, makes the connection to the health care mission of the hospital, and shows executive and statewide endorsement.

Every administrator must be able to see how the proposed policy would work on their unique campus. Using the assessment to capture current status, NCPP builds an action plan for policy implementation that is tailored to the hospital’s current state, providing simple short- and long-term steps towards full implementation. Additionally, NCPP regularly convenes stakeholders, such as the Hospital Advisory Team, Preventive Benefits Roundtable, or Food Industry Roundtable, to identify ways to ease implementation and reduce large-scale barriers.

Hospitals need to know that the policies NCPP is proposing are attainable and observable in other hospitals. The Centers of Excellence and other leading hospitals provide first-person accounts of success. In addition, NCPP hosts online and in-person training events where hospitals can hear directly from each other about implementation success and have access to the dozens of detailed technical assistance tools.

Assisting Hospitals through Stages of Implementation

There are four basic stages of implementation: planning and persuasion, commitment to initiate, implementation,

and maintenance and compliance. NCPP works with our key partners and hospitals to encourage momentum and success at each stage.

Planning and persuasion involves tailored messaging to multiple stakeholders in each hospital—from the executive suite to the wellness, security, clinical, and food service staff who do the day-to-day work the policy requires. Tailored pitches motivate hospital staff and address their barriers and concerns. Key partnerships with The Duke Endowment, the North Carolina Hospital Association, regional hospital associations, food management companies, and other critical partners allow NCPP to gain entrée and trust with hospital leaders. NCPP also fosters friendly competition

Figure 1.
The Cost of Doing Nothing in North Carolina¹

**Tobacco Use, Physical Inactivity and Poor Nutrition
Cost North Carolina \$26 Billion Each Year**

	North Carolina	Per Employee	Per Resident
Tobacco Use	\$4.75 billion	\$1,051	\$536
Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity	\$12.1 billion	\$8,676	\$1,366
Physical Inactivity	\$8.970 billion	\$1,984	\$1,013
Total	\$25.82 billion	\$5,711	\$2,915

among hospitals and systems by tracking statewide progress on maps and by acknowledging and celebrating success through a statewide prevention newsletter, annual awards ceremony, hospital to hospital competitions, and media support.

Getting hospitals to ‘sign on’ to the tobacco-free or healthy food initiatives can take different forms of persuasion, depending on the culture of each hospital. The CEO Commitment is a simple form that CEOs sign to show their support for wellness. Wellness and human resource directors complete the NCPP WorkHealthy America Assessment to see where their organization has opportunities to strengthen prevention policies, benefits and, programs, and then they attend a training event to initiate implementation.

Implementing the action plan can take time—sometimes more than one year—and maintenance of these changes requires ongoing diligence. Therefore the commitment to wellness needs to be from the executive level, and the action plan should be developed with a cross-cutting wellness team to guide its development and execution. NCPP provides

technical assistance through site visits, webinars, online tools, and other resources throughout the process.

Barriers to Implementation

Many barriers to implementation at the start of the Initiative were typical, including a lack of prevention focus

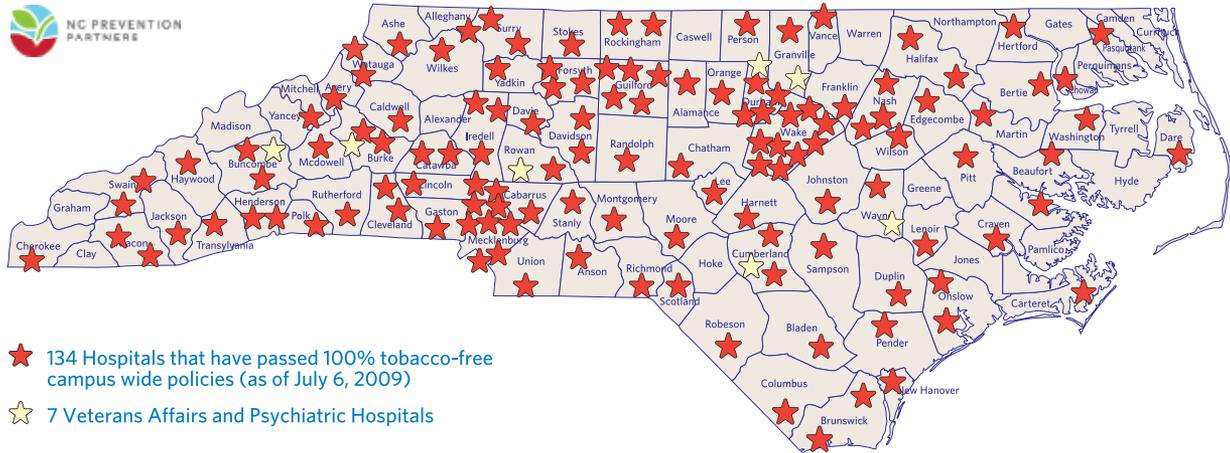
in the organization’s strategic plan, lack of strong leadership within wellness teams, insufficient budgeting for wellness, and lack of awareness about effective obesity prevention and tobacco-free system models. Perhaps the strongest barrier is cultural—North Carolina’s ties to tobacco and Southern style foods clearly shape attitudes and behaviors.

Table 1.
Policy Change Models for the Healthy NC Hospital Initiative

Phase	Phase 1: Tobacco-Free Campus	Phase 2: Healthy Food Environment	Phase 3: Quit Tobacco Systems for Employees and Patients
Evidence-based policy and environmental change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Written policy to prohibit use of all tobacco products on hospital campus ■ Clear signage informing staff and visitors of tobacco-free campus policy ■ Enhancement of cessation benefits available for employees, patients, and visitors ■ Development and implementation of compliance plan ■ Preparation and training for staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide access to healthy food using NCPP’s standard definitions of healthy, working through vendors to bring in healthy items, staff training on recipe preparation and portion sizes, and a commitment to provide healthy foods whenever any food is provided ■ Use pricing strategies to incentivize healthy options ■ Use marketing strategies, including icons to identify healthy options, nutrition information at the point of selection, and strategic placement of healthy options ■ Promote benefits and incentives that encourage lifelong healthy nutrition ■ Educate staff and visitors about healthy options and good nutrition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provide a systems approach, identify all tobacco-using employees and patients, educate and advise to quit, refer to medications and counseling, follow-up ■ Offer and promote cessation benefits at no-cost or low-cost, include counseling, and access to prescription and over-the-counter medications ■ Provide and promote incentives to motivate joining quit programs and successful quitting for employees ■ Establish tobacco use as a vital sign or required field for patient medical records ■ Provide health care team counseling approach ■ Offer cessation medications, both prescription and nicotine replacement therapies (NRTs), counseling, and community follow-up, use fax referral to the NC Quitline ■ File reimbursements for quit coaching for patients
Centers of Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Chowan Hospital ■ FirstHealth of the Carolinas, Moore Regional Campus ■ Mission Hospital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Carolinas Medical Center ■ FirstHealth of the Carolinas, Moore Regional Campus ■ Mission Hospital ■ Pitt County Memorial Hospital ■ Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Chowan Hospital ■ FirstHealth of the Carolinas, Moore Regional Campus ■ Mission Hospital ■ Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center

For more information, please go to: www.ncpreventionpartners.org/hospitals.

Figure 2.
NC Prevention Partners Helps Hospitals Establish 100% Tobacco-Free Campuses, Provides Comprehensive Cessation Support, and Builds Tobacco-Free Communities



This map includes all acute care hospitals as defined by the NC Hospital Association, and other participating hospitals. Healthy NC Hospitals is managed by NC Prevention Partners (www.ncpreventionpartners.org) and is funded by The Duke Endowment in partnership with the NC Hospital Foundation. For more information, contact Melva Fager Okun, DrPH, at [melva \(at\) ncpreventionpartners.org](mailto:melva@ncpreventionpartners.org) or 919.969.7022 ext. 202; NC Prevention Partners, 88 Vilcom Circle, Suite 110, Chapel Hill, NC 27514. Last updated July 6, 2009. © 2007-2008 NC Prevention Partners

The key to overcoming these barriers is establishing a new culture—one where wellness is prioritized and supported at all levels of the hospital. A clear catalyst for this change began with The Duke Endowment and the North Carolina Hospital Association. They have provided critical leadership that prioritizes wellness. Funding to NCPP allowed for the creation of a statewide leadership movement to share successful wellness change models between hospitals. Additionally, the formation of a Hospital Advisory Team and the Centers of Excellence allowed policy models to be firmly based in science and practice-tested before they were offered to hospital leadership teams.

NCPP staff created unique tools that distilled the science into feasible, ready-to-implement models, and then provided training and technical assistance to support the goals to be accomplished in an efficient and effective manner. Joining with innovative and progressive corporate leadership in the state’s hospitals, the NCPP staff acted as agents of change, constantly pointing a positive, bright, shining spotlight on the hospitals that were setting the highest mark. The biggest and the smallest hospitals all caught the attention of the NCPP staff.

Cultural changes are slower to make but are more significant. At the onset of the Initiative, many were doubtful of the chances for success in creating tobacco-free zones at every acute care hospital in the state. William Pully, president of the North Carolina Hospital Association, stated, “If I were a betting man, I would have bet against this project being

successful and lost a lot of money.” He was not alone in this feeling. Even now, after the last hospital in North Carolina went tobacco-free campus-wide on July 6, 2009, many state and national leaders are impressed that North Carolina is the first state in the nation to meet this milestone. The same is true for making healthy food the easy and affordable choice. Food behaviors will change slowly, but it will happen by making healthy options accessible, affordable, and by using effective marketing techniques.

Hospitals: Community Leaders in Prevention and Wellness

To date, the Healthy NC Hospital Initiative has reached millions of North Carolinians through effective policies that promote healthy eating and reduce exposure and use of tobacco products (see Table 2, page 100). As the Initiative matures, longer term outcomes will be assessed.

NCPP has just released a new comprehensive approach to promoting physical activity in worksites. We anticipate hospitals will take a lead in establishing new norms for supporting employees to increase their physical activity, just as they have in quitting tobacco and improving nutrition.

Hospitals have responded to NCPP’s call to action to take the lead in promoting worksite wellness, tobacco-free behaviors, and access to healthy and affordable foods. Many hospitals have already begun transferring this worksite commitment to a community commitment, serving as role-models and resources for other businesses in the community

seeking to promote prevention. Examples of the specific role hospitals can play in communities include: serving as mentors for schools in promoting affordable and delicious healthy foods, promoting tobacco cessation services among private businesses, and convening community leaders to take a broader approach to prevention.

Because hospitals are huge employers and have a community-based commitment to health, they are clear leaders and innovators in promoting employee and community wellness. Often the hospital is able to establish a new community norm that other institutions are able to follow. For example, in some communities, the local hospital's tobacco-free policy allowed other community businesses and organizations to follow suit. NC Prevention Partners is proud to work alongside North Carolina's hospital leaders, setting the pace and celebrating their significant accomplishments. Other workforce and community

sectors, such as schools, churches, and small businesses, can look to hospitals for their example and resources in implementing those same healthy workplace policies in their environments. **NCMJ**

Table 2.
Impact of the Healthy NC Hospital Initiative,
July 2006-December 2009

Key Process Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 134 hospitals have implemented 100% tobacco-free environments on campus ▪ 23 hospital clinical services now fax-refer patients to QuitlineNC ▪ 48 hospitals have implemented healthy food environments on campus ▪ 52 hospitals have action plans for healthy food environment implementation in 2010
Health Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 210,000 hospital employees are protected from exposure to secondhand smoke while at work ▪ 900 hospital patients and employees who use tobacco were given access to the NC Quitline ▪ 15 million patient visits to North Carolina hospitals are secondhand smoke-free ▪ 80,000 hospital employees have daily access to affordable healthy food

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