

## Pilot Survey of Smoking Behavior and Attitudes Among Taipei City Residents

In the past 20 years, cancer has become an increasingly important cause of mortality in the Taiwan Area. In 1982, cancer displaced cerebrovascular disease as the leading cause of mortality with an annual mortality rate of 78.66 cancer deaths per 100,000 population<sup>1</sup>. Of all cancer deaths, the mortality rate due to lung cancer has had the largest increase during the period 1969-1981 for both men and women (138% and 108% respectively). Lung cancer in 1983 was the leading cause of cancer deaths in women and the second leading cause of cancer deaths in men<sup>2</sup>.

The evidence that cigarette smoking is related to lung and many other types of cancer is overwhelming<sup>3</sup>. A recent report from Japan also suggests that non-smoking wives of men who smoke may be at increased risk of lung cancer from what has been called "passive" smoking<sup>4</sup>.

To better understand the magnitude of the problem of smoking in Taiwan, the trainees from the Bureau of Disease Control's Applied Epidemiology Program assisted by student volunteers from National Taiwan University conducted a household survey of smoking behavior and attitudes among Taipei City residents. In this pilot survey, 200 households were randomly selected from the Taipei City census list to estimate smoking prevalence with 95% confidence and 5% precision. Interviews were conducted during evening hours, and one individual per household over the age of 15 years was randomly selected from all household members present to complete a brief questionnaire. Households in which no one was home were revisited at least once to complete as many interviews as possible. Smokers were defined as those who smoked at least one cigarette per day for more than one year. Ex-smokers were defined as former smokers who had stopped smoking completely for at least one year.

During the period October 11-12, 1984, a total of 184 interviews were conducted for a completion rate of 92%. Seventy-five (57%) of 131 men interviewed were smokers compared to 2 (4%) of 53 women. Ninety-one percent of all smokers surveyed smoke "Long-Life" brand cigarettes produced locally in Taiwan. Forty-two percent of smokers interviewed said they would like to stop smoking, and 39% admitted they had already tried unsuccessfully to stop one or more times. On the average, smokers consumed 15.8 cigarettes per day. The average age at which they started smoking was 20.1 years; however, comparing present age to age started smoking, a correlation was observed indicating that younger individuals are starting to smoke at an earlier age ( $r=0.30$ ,  $0.01 < P < 0.05$ ).

All respondents were asked a series of questions to determine their attitudes towards anti-smoking legislation. Their responses are summarized in Table 1, and indicate a large proportion of both smokers and non-smokers are in favor of strict laws aimed at reducing the number of smokers and protecting the rights of non-smokers.