

Editorial... : with compassion in mind...

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Editorial..

With compassion in mind....

'Nobody should try and force me into giving up smoking', said my friend and kept on coughing between every few words during our conversation. No, but you surely will admit that smoking is harmful to your health, was my answer. 'Yes, but it's still my business and my decision', was his! What about the people around you that become "secondary smokers", because of you, was my next question!

- I can't remember his answer since the discussion happened a few years ago. By now we are all more 'enlightened', warnings are printed on tobacco packages, the price of tobacco products has been increased dramatically, TV adverts brought us 'gruesome images' of smoking related illness and now the New Zealand Government is caus-

ing controversy by offering financial help in order to wean the most vulnerable and habitual smokers off their health-damaging habit.

Travelling on Singapore- and on Swiss Airlines recently we noticed that smoking is totally banned. 'Poor smokers' I said, hearing the announcement from the cockpit, while my wife said 'thank God for that!'

On our travels in Switzerland and some neighbouring countries we noticed that the ban on smoking is now generally applied in public places. In some Swiss restaurants there is but a very small corner set aside for the smoker. Equally we noticed that the smoking compartments in modern compositions of the Swiss railways are much smaller than in earlier years. - In the center of the Singapore airport which is like all public places smokefree we came across a specially constructed 'smoker's room' sealed on all sides with self-

closing doors and with internal ventilation system.

I suppose if you should have been in the business of selling tobacco products in recent years, you would have suffered great loss of turnover and that is what we have been told happened in Switzerland also.

- I for myself, a non-smoker, and being thankful for the fact, am still wondering if it was lack of money in formative years, or the good fortune of having had a non-smoking Dad as a role-model which kept me safe from a habit that has become frowned upon.

- With all the 'good news' of reduction of smoking in both our countries New Zealand and Switzerland, it is sad and disturbing to hear that in both countries (maybe worldwide) an extraordinary high proportion of teenage girls are 'bucking the trend' and take up smoking.

- Meanwhile I have just heard a report by Swiss Radio International about some exciting work done by two Swiss Doctors of medicine, researching possible prevention and termination of smoking. The two doctors, **Thomas and Erich Cerny**, are Brothers. Their parents and their grandparents were doctors of medicine as well. Erich has specialised in immunology and Thomas works specifically in the field of cancer treatment. Doctor Erich Cerny had the original idea to create an injectable antidote against nicotine. The result of Erich and Thomas' work is hailed as a sensation in Swiss medical circles.

First trials on animals have been positive.

- The idea apparently demands another four or five years of trials, to be conducted at the Cantonal Hospital in St. Gallen with human patients. With successful long term trials, it will be possible to inject smokers with nicotine antidote, which should neutralise the patients nicotine, thereby preventing the impact of nicotine on the patient's brain in creating an on-going urge for more nicotine.

- The report by Swiss Radio International even suggested that in time it may be possible to use the injectable nicotine antidote as a preventive measure to stop people taking up smoking in the first place. Exciting news, isn't it, unless you're part of the tobacco growing or manufacturing industry..!

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