

## Healing and Hope

July 31, 2015

Does anyone else enjoy the constant weather show Mother Nature gives us here in Oklahoma? (Ok, some of our weather is hard to “enjoy”, but I certainly can appreciate her effort and skills. And she’s never dull for long.) We can have all four seasons in 24 hours!

Maybe it’s from growing up in the country, but gigantic white fluffy clouds, new baby animals and fresh green fields offer a sense of hope and freshness.

Or seeing a hay field with large round bales during Summer harvest.

Or watching the leaves as they turn into the most beautiful vibrant colors in the Fall.

Or the large white snowflakes and crackling fires in the Winter...

*Full disclosure, Fall is my FAV with its oranges, red and golds (and football), but Spring, in all its windy, chaotic, excited greens and bright colors is a close second.*

OK, mostly I love baby animals! Recently, I convinced my handsome half that we needed a new puppy at home. Yep, need... If you know me, you are already laughing... (Our 5 acres looks like a dog sanctuary.)

Say hello to Sir Mason McLovin...

*Yes, that is him, chilling at our local park....*

Bless it, he snorts and waddles with all the grace of a walrus swimming through peanut butter.

That little boy brings a new meaning to “fresh” but he also loves and loves and loves.

He brings laughter and joy and hope and happiness.

I hear you .... *He’s cute (ok, REALLY cute) but what does this have to do with work?*

Great question, so let’s get to it...



## Clean Air, Passive Smoking and Our Responsibility

From a health standpoint, we have a responsibility to our patients, clients, consumers and co-workers to provide them with a clean environment to recover in, seek support in and work in.

BUT what about our employees who use commercial tobacco?

And our tobacco using patients and visitors?

Where exactly does the line lay between individual rights and our responsibility to those who trust us to protect them?

From an employment standpoint we can’t tell tobacco users they can’t smoke “ever”.

However, if they come to work (particularly in a health care setting) smelling of tobacco smoke, we CAN do something about that. We have a **responsibility** to do something about it.

### WHAT is Passive Smoking?

[Secondhand smoke](#) is a mixture of two types of smoke. Mainstream smoke, which is the smoke exhaled from the smoker, and Sidestream smoke, which is the smoke that comes off of a lit cigarette. Since 1964, 2.5 million Americans have died from exposure to secondhand smoke. In that time, *100,000 babies have died due to parental smoking.*

[Thirdhand smoke](#) is a relatively new term used to describe the residual contamination from tobacco smoke. It’s the smell on a smokers clothes, in their hair, and on their skin. It’s the yellow on the walls inside a smokers home.

*“Tobacco smoke smells bad for a reason. To warn us to move away from poison.”*

–Author Unknown

## WHY should I address it?

- Health care employees who smell like tobacco smoke can be a relapse trigger for patients, and others, who are trying to quit.
- They can also be a point of contention... “Why are you telling me (the patient) I can’t smoke here, when your employees come in the room smelling like smoke?”
- They can be a [safety risk for patients](#) who have severe respiratory (or other health) issues.
- Ultimately, we must protect those who have come to us, sick, tired, and in need of encouragement and support.

## HOW do I address it?

This can (and should) be addressed in the tobacco policy AND in the grooming/appearance policies.

- During work time, **residual odors of any kind, including perfume, cologne, smoke or tobacco will not be present on an employee’s breath, body, or clothing.** Individuals not in compliance will be asked to remedy this situation, which may require the use of unpaid time.
  - By addressing it as a hygiene issue (you don’t allow other strong odors like cologne or perfume) you aren’t singling out tobacco users specifically.
- Enforcement should be handled as with any other standard disciplinary procedure.

By addressing second and thirdhand smoke, we create a MUCH healthier environment for all those we are called to serve.

## Educational/CME Opportunities

High-Five to the University of Oklahoma’s Stephenson Cancer Center for their research on the impact of secondhand smoke.

[Landmark Study at the Stephenson Cancer Center Finds Even Low Exposure to Secondhand Smoke Causes DNA Damage](#)

Exposure to even minimal levels of secondhand tobacco smoke causes significant DNA damage in human cells, according to a study using a new detection method. DNA damage plays a key role in the development of cancer and other neurodegenerative, pulmonary, cardiovascular, and aging-related diseases.

[Passive Smoking Hurts Pets as Much as People](#)

When Heather Goddard’s 8-year-old rescue dog, Clover, collapsed during a walk, Goddard rushed her pet to the vet, where X-rays revealed that Clover had dark spots on her lungs. The veterinarian diagnosed the dog with lung cancer, which was likely caused by inhaling and ingesting toxic chemicals from secondhand smoke.

I also have to send a high-paw to Oklahoma State University for their research on [pets and secondhand smoke](#). (Just to be fair you know.)



*"The day the Lord created hope was probably the same day He created Spring." – Bern Williams  
(I think that's when he created baby animals too.)*

It's obvious that we are in the business of healing people.

But more than that, we are in the business of healing families, educating and setting the example of wellness and giving hope when possible.... Furry family members included.

*Until next week,*

**Oklahoma Strategic Tribal Alliance for Health (OSTAH)**  
**Margie Burkhart**  
**Cherokee Nation Healthy Nation**



**Oklahoma Hospital Association (OHA)**  
**Jennifer W. Roysdon**  
**Hospitals Helping Patients Quit**



*"There is no clinical treatment available today that can reduce illness, prevent death, and increase quality of life more than effective tobacco treatment interventions."*

-Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence, US Public Health Service, US Dept. of Health and Human Services