

MEDIA RELEASE

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Latest issue: New cancer statistics show smoking is still key; Australia's top 10 health and medicine Twitter accounts

Smoking is responsible for an increasing proportion of cancer deaths in NSW women and lung cancer has now overtaken breast cancer as the largest cause of female cancer death, new figures published in the journal *Public Health Research & Practice* show.

Researchers from the Cancer Institute NSW and the World Lung Foundation analysed NSW Central Cancer Registry data between 1972 and 2008 to provide the most up-to-date figures now available on cancer deaths in NSW.

They found that overall cancer deaths have dropped by 26% in men since 1989, with nearly half that drop due to a lower number of smoking-attributable cancer deaths. But in women, even though overall deaths from cancer dropped by 19%, the rate of smoking-attributable cancer deaths increased and one in every five deaths from cancer in women is now caused by smoking.

"Smoking-attributable cancer mortality in women has been increasing since the 1970s, with the increase slowing since the late 1980s," said Cancer Institute NSW epidemiologist and paper author Nicola Creighton.

"Despite declining overall mortality from cancer in NSW, more than 3300 cancer deaths in 2008 were due to the accumulated hazard of smoking in current and ex-smokers. This highlights the continued importance of making sure tobacco control remains part of any plans to comprehensively tackle cancer.

"Information on the number of cancer deaths caused by smoking in NSW is lacking and this study will provide data to inform cancer prevention and health policy in NSW."

- [Read the paper](#)

Fitness personality tops list of health and medicine Twitter accounts

Personal trainer and TV personality Michelle Bridges (@MishBridges) has the most followed Australian Twitter account with a health and medicine focus, according to a paper from Sydney University researchers published in the latest issue of *Public Health Research & Practice*.

Researchers Professor Simon Chapman and Dr Becky Freeman identified the top 10 Australian Twitter accounts in health and medicine and found that after Bridges' 104,000 followers, the McGrath Foundation (@McGrathFdn) came in at number two, with more than 58,000 followers.

They found single health issue Twitter accounts such as those on nutrition, sugar and fitness have far higher followings than Twitter accounts managed by individuals who tweet on a variety of issues. But nongovernment organisations and government departments who tweet on health generally have far higher median followings than both these groups, despite the fact that they tweet less often.

The researchers interviewed some of the top health and medical tweeters, and asked them to nominate how Twitter had affected them. Noble Prize winner Professor Peter Doherty (@ProfPCDoherty) said Twitter was influencing how he communicated with a broader audience, while remote GP Dr Min Le Cong (@ketaminh) said Twitter had reduced isolation for remote Australians and was an immensely powerful way to network remote and rural health professionals.

"Connecting with other users, giving a voice to groups and issues that are normally ignored in the mainstream press, and demonstrating leadership of neglected public health issues were all highlighted by top tweeters as key Twitter impacts," the authors said.

- [Read the paper](#)

Other papers in this issue of *Public Health Research & Practice*

Issue 3 of the journal features a series of papers on tobacco control.

The national and international regulatory environment in tobacco control

Kenneth E Warner

- [Read paper](#)

Tobacco retail regulation: the next frontier in tobacco control?

Colleen Smyth, Becky Freeman, Audrey Mag

- [Read paper](#)

Managing nicotine dependence in NSW hospitals under the Smoke-free Health Care Policy

Colin Mendelsohn

- [Read paper](#)

Lifting the burden: a coordinated approach to action on Aboriginal tobacco resistance and control in NSW

Jasmine Sarin, Jennifer Hunt, Rowena Ivers, Colleen Smyth

- [Read paper](#)

Application of system dynamics modelling to support health policy

Jo-An Atkinson, Robert Wells, Andrew Page, Amanda Dominello, Mary Haines, Andrew Wilson

- [Read paper](#)

Categorising major cardiovascular disease hospitalisations from routinely collected data

Grace Joshy, Rosemary Korda, Walter Abhayaratna, Kay Soga, Emily Banks

- [Read paper](#)

Making the cycling environment safer: an investigation based on hospital admissions

Ben Ewald, Tim Cowan

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