The short- and long-term effects of smoking

The following information was obtained from the American Cancer Society, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the Wellness Councils of America and the American Lung Association on the short- and long-term effects of smoking. It is being shared to educate College employees on these topics.

What are some of the short-term and long-term effects of smoking cigarettes?
Smoking causes many types of cancer, but cancers account for only about half of the deaths related to smoking. Long-term, smoking is also a major cause of heart disease, aneurysms, bronchitis, emphysema and stroke, and it contributes to the severity of pneumonia and asthma. Skin wounds take longer to heal and the immune system may be less effective in smokers compared to nonsmokers.

The truth is that cigarette smokers die younger than nonsmokers. In fact, according to a study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) done in the late 1990s, smoking shortened male smokers’ lives by 13.2 years and female smokers’ lives by 14.5 years. Both men and women who smoke are much more likely to die during middle age (between the ages of 35 and 69) than those who have never smoked.

Smoking also causes many short-term effects, such as decreased lung function. Because of this, smokers often suffer shortness of breath and nagging coughs; they often will tire easily during physical activity. Some other common short-term effects include: a diminished ability to smell and taste, premature aging of the skin, bad breath, stained teeth, and increased risk of sexual impotence in men.

What are the chances that smoking will kill you?
About half of all those who continue to smoke will die because of the habit. In the United States, tobacco causes nearly 1 in 5 deaths, killing about 440,000 Americans each year.

Smoking is the single most preventable cause of death in our society, yet based on current patterns, will kill about 650 million people alive in the world today. Tobacco-caused deaths worldwide are expected to increase from about 5 million per year today to about 10 million per year by the 2030s.

The workplace is an ideal environment in which to encourage smokers to quit. Employees spend so much time at work that smoke-free policies and support can provide the incentive they need to succeed.