

Breathe easier

After reading the National Center for Health Statistics' report on America's life expectancy (June 11) I was left with one question — when is the rest of the story going to be told.

The center wrote profusely about the preliminary report of 2006 numbers, based on data from more than 95 percent of the death certificates collected that year and affirmed "The 2006 increase is due mainly to falling mortality rates for nine of the 15 leading causes of death, including heart disease, cancer, accidents and diabetes."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, men who smoke increase their risk of death from lung cancer by more than 22 times and from bronchitis and emphysema by nearly 10 times. Women who smoke increase their risk of dying from lung cancer by nearly 12 times and the risk of dying from bronchitis and emphysema by more than 10 times. Smoking triples the risk of dying from heart disease among middle-aged men and women.

Every year in the United States, premature deaths from smoking rob more than five million years from the potential lifespan of those who have died.

After considering all those facts, should more emphasis have been made on how tobacco use affects life expectancy in the United States?

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