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FOR RELEASE

UK Study Finds Smoke-free Law Reduces Indoor Air Pollution

LEXINGTON, Ky. (Oct. 27, 2004) – The University of Kentucky College of Nursing, in collaboration with the UK College of Public Health, recently completed a study on the levels of fine particle air pollutants in Lexington’s bars, restaurants and other public venues. The study found that, prior to Lexington’s non-smoking ordinance, all venues tested were heavily polluted and dangerously above the federal standards for air quality. Air quality samples taken after the smoke-free law went into effect show dramatic improvement in levels across the board.

UK College of Public Health assistant professor and co-principal investigator in the study, Kiyoung Lee, said, “fine particle air pollution was 11 times lower after the smoke-free law was enforced at area businesses.”

The study was part of a \$75,000 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant awarded for leadership in public health to UK College of Nursing associate professor and co-principal investigator Ellen Hahn. A MetOne photometer was used to measure the level of fine particle air pollution. James Repace, a health physicist and an international secondhand smoke expert, was consulted on the project.

Air quality was assessed using the photometer in 10 hospitality venues in Lexington/Fayette County. The first data collection (before the smoke-free law) was conducted Friday and Saturday evenings, Sept. 19, 20 and 27, 2003. The second data collection (after the smoke-free law) was conducted on three weekend evenings in September 2004.

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A May 2004 study of indoor air pollution in seven cities, performed by the Roswell Park Cancer Institute, found air pollution levels were 82 percent lower, on average, in venues required by law to be smoke-free, compared to those where smoking was permitted. The study found that in cities without smoke-free laws, full-time bar and restaurant employees are exposed on the job to more than four times the average annual limits of fine particulate air pollution recommended by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

In a Delaware study published in the September 2004 issue of the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, researchers found that air pollution levels were 20 times worse before the smoke-free law went into effect than those outdoors and almost five times higher than the levels permitted under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's national air quality standards.

Dr. Thomas Whyne, professor of medicine, UK College of Medicine, and a cardiologist at UK's Gill Heart Institute, said, "The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently issued an advisory that persons with heart disease should avoid indoor settings where smoking is allowed because of new evidence that even short-term exposure to secondhand smoke can trigger heart attacks. These dramatic air quality results can only illustrate the many hazards of secondhand smoke."

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News conference participants:

Ellen Hahn, associate professor, UK College of Nursing and College of Public Health

Kiyong Lee, assistant professor, UK College of Public Health

Dr. Thomas Whyne, professor of medicine, UK College of Medicine, and a cardiologist at UK's Gill Heart Institute