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Greenwich Hospital smoking ban goes smoothly
By Lisa Chamoff, Staff Writer

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Since becoming smoke-free at the beginning of the year, Greenwich Hospital hasn't had much of a problem with people lighting up near the hospital, officials say.

Since Jan. 1, the hospital began prohibiting smoking in all areas of the campus, including outdoors, joining 12 other hospitals across the state.

The policy is part of an initiative by the Connecticut Hospital Association, and the goal is to have all 28 member hospitals become smoke-free by November 2010.

Since smoking was not allowed inside Greenwich Hospital for several years, the new policy banning tobacco use outside has not been a big issue, said Donna Gaudioso-Zeale, director of the hospital's Richard R. Pivrotto Center for Healthy Living.

"Most people felt we were smoke-free to begin with," Gaudioso-Zeale said.

There are clearly defined maps for employees that show where they can go to smoke off hospital grounds and the hospital offers access to smoking-cessation programs.

Gaudioso-Zeale said when she drives to the hospital, she sees employees who are smoking a good distance from the building. Visitors who light up in restricted areas are approached by security, but there have not been any reported problems.

Smokers have been at a recent disadvantage. A smoking ban covering restaurants and many other workplaces in Connecticut went into effect in 2003, and recently the federal tax on every pack of cigarettes jumped from 39 cents to \$1.01.

"It's kind of now socially unacceptable to be a smoker given the restaurants and things, so people are trying to abide by it," Gaudioso-Zeale said.

The other hospitals that adopted the ban also have had an easy time enforcing it, said Leslie Gianelli, a spokeswoman for the Connecticut Hospital Association. They include St. Vincent's Medical Center in Bridgeport and Bridgeport Hospital, Yale-New Haven Hospital and Connecticut Children's Medical Center in Hartford.

"It seems that people respect the fact that hospitals are institutions where healthy behavior is encouraged," Gianelli said.