

# Nicotine Giveaway's Success Questioned

*By ACSH Staff — May 25, 2010*

As the New York City Health Department [celebrates](#) <sup>[1]</sup> what it calls its most successful nicotine patch and gum giveaway since the program's inception in 2003, ACSH staffers question how effective the campaign is in actually enabling smokers to quit.

"It all depends on how you define 'success'," Stier says.

In boasting that the program has helped 70,000 smokers quit the habit, the Health Department is claiming a 35 percent cessation rate, which ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross says seems slightly inflated. Dr. Ross further questions the efficacy of nicotine patches and gum in allowing individuals to abstain from smoking and suggests that smokeless nicotine products would be a better alternative: The Swedish data on snus is very robust and shows that while the use of snus has increased, smoking rates have declined and so do the related adverse health effects.

ACSH's Dr. Elizabeth Whelan suggests that to improve the program's success, the giveaway should first try the free gum and patch, and if smokers are still not able to quit, they should return the following year to receive the smokeless variety.

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[1] <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/pr2010/pr019-10.shtml>