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Say no to that first puff: docs to bring out short film to educate teenagers

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INITIATIVE AIMED AT EMOTIONALLY CONNECTING WITH SCHOOLCHILDREN, TO MAKE THEM AWARE OF ILL-EFFECTS

Say no to that first puff: docs to bring out short film to educate teenagers

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A SHORT film. It is the new prescription that a group of doctors in the city has Come up with to connect with teenagers and steer them away from smoking or chewing tobacco. With growing concern about teenagers — particularly school-going children — smoking their "first puff" or tasting gutkha and getting addicted, the group plans to take the film to schools in

the city, with an appeal to children to "choose life — not tobacco". Dr Vandana Joshi, an ENT specialist who along with others have set up PACE - Prevent Addictions through Child Education, said the film was aimed at emotionally connecting with the schoolchildren to make them aware of the ill-effects of tobacco and related substances. "Film-makers Sumitra Bhawe and Sunil Sukhthankar will be directing the short film that will emphasise the message... A fund-raiser musical

programme will also be organised by the doctors' orchestra Let's Act on September 26, which will be compered by cardiologist Dr Jagdish Hiremath and social activist Dr Swati Bhawe." Radiologist Dr Sangeeta Mahajan, who is also involved in the programme and is coordinating with various parent-teacher associations, said several schools like Symbiosis, Karnatak and other English medium schools had welcomed the idea. "Apart from the film, the doctors are also prepar-



ing a DVD — titled A Day at a Cancer Hospital — that will show the ghastly effects of tobacco. We plan to conduct workshops for students to teach them how to avoid the temptation despite peer pressure to smoke the first puff or chew tobacco." Indian Medical Association city unit president Dr Sharad Agharkhedkar, who is also among the coordinators of the project, said, "We do not want to lecture to the children. Rather through the visual medium, the

school students themselves should realise how an addiction can destroy one's life." Joshi, who is also the president of the Association of Otorhinolaryngologists of India, said while Western countries had partially awakened to the horrors of smoking and there had been a decline in the habit in countries like the US, there had been an upsurge of tobacco consumption in India in the past 10 years. "The main addictive substance in tobacco is nicotine and the rest 6,000 poisons

and 43 cancer-producing agents come along as a free package deal to unsuspecting youngsters." Chest physician Dr Nitin Abhyankar, a member of the group, said statistics showed even 20-year-olds were hooked to smoking. "I have seen an increase in the number of youngsters who; chew tobacco also... We decided to take up the challenge of educating the schoolchildren from Standard 8-10, and it will be worth it if we can educate even 100 of them."