



Rutland Regional Medical Center

An Affiliate of Rutland Regional Health Services

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Breathe Deep, Breath Free Rutland Regional Medical Center Goes Tobacco-Free by Rick Hildebrant, MD Medical Director of the Hospitalist Program

As a Hospital Medicine Specialist, my colleagues and I care for most of the patients admitted to the inpatient unit at Rutland Regional Medical Center. Many of our patients are quite ill and suffer from a number of chronic illnesses that are a direct result of years of tobacco use such as heart disease, COPD and cancer. Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death and results in nearly 500,000 deaths in the US each year of which 42,000 are due to second hand smoke exposure. Because of the danger smoking poses to employees, patients and visitors, Rutland Regional was the first hospital in Vermont to ban smoking on the medical wards. At that time, some smokers likely felt this policy was infringing on their personal liberties, some staff may have left the institution, but most were thankful to breathe fresh air.

At its core, Rutland Regional is dedicated to improving the health of all who call Rutland their home, and by permitting smoking we were exposing our community to the dangers of smoking and acting in direct opposition to this belief. Starting this policy was very clearly the right choice, and shortly afterwards all hospitals in the state and the country followed suit.

Despite this forward thinking, Rutland Regional has continued to permit smoking while on its campus and now significantly lags behind the state and the country in its approach to smoking. People come to Rutland Regional when they are at their worst, when they are too sick to breathe, too weak to walk, and in too much pain to think. They look for help during these times of need and for advice in not only preventing illness but achieving health. They look to Rutland Regional to set the tone for what health and wellness looks like in Rutland County. For this reason, Rutland Regional will ban tobacco products on its campus starting June 1, 2016. I look forward to a time when everyone who comes to Rutland Regional can be free from the dangers of smoking and can truly breathe deep and breathe free.