



## **Smokers face greater risk of heart attack and stroke during surgery**

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Tobacco experts are sharing their research with surgeons from the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) at a conference on Magnetic Island this weekend, which is exploring lifestyle factors that affect surgical outcomes.

More than 300,000 smokers who undergo surgery each year in Australia are placing themselves at greatly increased risk of complications and electronic cigarettes could compound the problem.

Smokers who don't 'stop before the op' experience longer recovery times and a higher risk of wound infection, heart attack, and stroke, as opposed to patients who quit four to six weeks before surgery.

Dr Ashley Webb, a Melbourne anaesthetist who trained in Townsville, has published several research papers on how surgery can reduce the burden of tobacco-related disease.

Smoking is the largest preventable cause of death and disease in Australasia. Dr Webb describes the 20,000 deaths from tobacco in Australia & New Zealand each year as, "equivalent to the Titanic sinking once a month in the Tasman Sea."

"Surgeons who discuss their patient's smoking during consultation can double the chance of a patient quitting before their operation compared with patients who are not warned by their surgeon," Dr Webb said.

Professor in Public Health at the University of Sydney Simon Chapman is providing an overview of the literature on electronic cigarettes, which shows that people who don't use them may have a better chance of quitting than those who do.

"A meta-analysis of eleven published studies found that smokers who vape [inhale and exhale the vapour from e-cigarettes] are 30% less likely to quit smoking than smokers who don't," Professor Chapman said.

"More recently, a study of English smokers found that 13.9% of non-vapers successfully quit after 12 months, compared with 9.5% of occasional vapers and 8.1% of daily e-cigarette users."

View the full program of the RACS [Queensland Annual Scientific Meeting](#).

### **About RACS**

RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck surgery, Paediatric surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive surgery, Urology and Vascular surgery.

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