

The effects of obesity, smoking, and excessive alcohol intake on healthcare expenditure in a comprehensive medical scheme

To the Editor: In your November 2013 edition, Sturm *et al.*^[1] confirm quantitatively that which we clinicians have known qualitatively for many years, *viz.* that 'obesity and tobacco use are associated with significantly increased healthcare expenditure'. This, and other research papers on the same issue, prompt me to ask when the Commissioner of Medical Schemes will permit the various medical aids to charge non-smokers, and those of an appropriate body mass index, a lower monthly premium? And when will the Provincial Health Departments charge appropriately higher fees for management of the preventable salvage work?

Why should those who look after themselves subsidise the feckless?

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1. Sturm R, An R, Maroba J, Patel D. The effects of obesity, smoking, and excessive alcohol intake on healthcare expenditure in a comprehensive medical scheme. *S Afr Med J* 2013;103(11):840-844. [<http://dx.doi.org/10.7196/SAMJ.7260>]

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