DECLARATION

I, Mireille Yimnga Ngantcha Chamba Kapseh Cheyip, declare that this research report is my own work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Science in Medicine in the branch of Epidemiology and Biostatistics in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at this or any other University.

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........day of ..........2005
Dedicated to Bonny, Mama and Joseph for all their sacrifices
ABSTRACT

Background: In association with other occupational exposures like silica dust and radon, cigarette smoking impacts on the health of miners, especially with regard to the risk of developing COPD, PTB and lung cancer. These compensable diseases place a great burden on both miners and mines. The prevalence of smoking among black miners in South Africa is unknown and data for white miners are not recent.

Objectives: To determine the prevalence of smoking and smoking trends in miners in a platinum mining company from 1998 to 2002 and to describe some important factors associated with their smoking habits.

Methods: This was a cross-sectional study using medical surveillance data about employees of a platinum mining company from 1998 to 2002.

Results: Over 80000 repeated records of over 25000 miners were studied over the five-year period. The prevalence of smokers was 44.4%. Miners were less likely to smoke in 2002 than in 1998 (OR 0.23, CI 0.21 – 0.25). Over this period, smoking prevalence dropped from 43.3% to 31.3%. The decrease was evident in most socio-demographic groups. There was also a decrease in cigarette consumption over time (p<0.001). Multivariable analysis showed that whites were more likely to “always” and/or “ever” smoke than blacks (adjusted OR=2.4, CI 1.79 – 3.20 and OR 2.5, CI 1.98 – 3.27, respectively).

Conclusion: Even though there has been a decline in smoking prevalence since 1998, the relatively higher prevalence in platinum miners compared to that of the general population, and the additional effect of occupational exposures, are still a public health concern. There is need to establish smoking cessation and prevention programmes and to continue collecting detailed smoking information during annual surveillance programmes that could be used to monitor the effectiveness of such programmes.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Prof Mary Ross and Dr Jill Murray for supervising this work, Safety in Mines Research Advisory Committee (SIMRAC) for funding my research, Dr Rob Dowdeswell for making the data available and his assistance, Prof Jonathan Levin and Ms Gill Nelson for statistical support and write up, and Dr Renay Weiner for her continued advice and encouragement.

The School of Public Health for making facilities accessible for the completion of the work. Especially Lindy Mphalele (my sweetie) for her ever-ready assistance and Dr Daniel Ansong (‘Prof’) for his endless assistance.

My husband Bonny and my parents and parents-in-law for their continued moral and financial support

My baby Joseph who had to be taken care of by others so that I could complete this work.

The contributions of my classmates, especially Dr George Awvounda and many others who have not been mentioned here were greatly appreciated.

Above all, I give thanks to the Almighty God for strength, life and His inspiration throughout the course.
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