

Dear South Dakotans,

On behalf of the Department of Health, it is my pleasure to recognize this very important issue of *South Dakota Medicine*.



Tobacco use, the focus of this special edition, remains the leading cause of preventable death in South Dakota. More deaths are caused each year by tobacco use than by HIV, illegal drug use, alcohol use, motor vehicle injuries, suicides and murders *combined*. The total medical cost incurred annually in South Dakota due to tobacco use is estimated at \$274 million.

Physicians play a significant role in providing the guidance and support to patients as they take the very difficult journey to quit using tobacco products. The department offers a wealth of resources for physicians to help their patients who want to be tobacco-free; such as the South Dakota QuitLine and the new www.BeFreeSD.com Web site.

The Department of Health is pleased to count the South Dakota State Medical Association as a strong partner in the effort to reduce the public health burden of tobacco in our state. We are pleased to have played a part in developing this issue, and we are hopeful it will help both physicians and the patients they serve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in gold ink that reads "Doneen B. Hollingsworth".

Doneen B. Hollingsworth
Secretary of Health