

Heart attacks decline after smoking ban:

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DALLAS (Reuters) - A Colorado city ban on smoking at workplaces and in public buildings may have sparked a steep decline in heart attacks, researchers reported on Monday.

In the 18 months after a no-smoking ordinance took effect in Pueblo in 2003, hospital admissions for heart attacks for city residents dropped 27 percent, according to the study led by Dr. Carl Bartecchi, a clinical professor of medicine at the University of Colorado School of Medicine in Denver.

"Heart attack hospitalizations did not change significantly for residents of surrounding Pueblo County or in the comparison city of Colorado Springs, neither of which have non-smoking ordinances," said the American Heart Association, which published the study in its journal *Circulation*.

The association said this was further evidence of the damage wrought by secondhand smoke.

"The decline in the number of heart attack hospitalizations within the first year and a half after the non-smoking ban that was observed in this study is most likely due to a decrease in the effect of secondhand smoke as a triggering factor for heart attacks," it said.

It said the researchers had taken into account other variables such as air pollution and community-wide changes in preventive care and concluded that they did not have an impact on their findings.

The American Heart Association estimates that more than 35,000 nonsmokers die each year in the United States from coronary heart disease because they inhale secondhand smoke.

Working-class Pueblo has a higher percentage of smokers -- 22.6 percent -- than the statewide average of 18.6 percent.

"Adopting a non-smoking ordinance has the potential to rapidly improve the cardiovascular health of a community," Bartecchi said in a statement. Continued... Pueblo forbids smoking in indoor workplaces and all public buildings, including restaurants, bars and recreational facilities such as bowling alleys.

"You can save lives with drugs and expensive, sophisticated devices, but this single community action led to 108 fewer heart attacks in an 18-month period," Bartecchi said.

"Each hospital admission for a heart attack costs an average of \$20,000 here in Pueblo," he said. "So in addition to saving lives, non-smoking ordinances also save a lot of money."