

## **Docs form united front to fight killer**

By Aedan Helmer, Sun Media

Ottawa's medical community is going on the offensive in the battle against heart disease and stroke.

A united front of more than 14 health and community partners joined ranks to officially launch a five-year strategy to combat Canada's No. 1 killer.

The Champlain Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Network, which covers 1.2 million residents in Ottawa and surrounding counties, hopes to become a world leader by focusing on prevention.

"We have two choices," said Dr. Robert Cushman, the network's CEO. "We can continue to pump money into our hospital system, or we can work together to prevent heart disease and stroke from happening in the first place."

Each year, more than 2,400 people die of heart disease and stroke locally, and according to network chairman Dr. Andrew Pipe 80% of premature deaths are preventable.

The strategy targets risk factors -- smoking, physical inactivity, obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, eating habits -- and implements preventive measures in schools, hospitals, primary- and secondary-care facilities, workplaces and in the community at large.

Pipe pointed to the success of the smoking cessation initiative at area hospitals as setting a "worldwide example."

"We're now able to help 5,000 to 6,000 smokers each year in Champlain District hospitals," said Pipe. "Until we got this program into place, absolutely nothing was being done."

With the area's aging demographic, prevention has become "our most important responsibility," said Pipe. "Given the aging population, chronic disease is going to become even more of a burden."