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## Rainbow Rowell: Smoking at hospital lights fire in child

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When Reigan Lawrence sees someone smoking, she just gets so *mad*.



Reigan Lawrence

Especially when she sees someone smoking outside a hospital.

How can people smoke at a *hospital*, she wants to know. People who are sick. Or people who are supposed to be helping sick people get better.

"I don't think people should be in there dying," the 10-year-old said, "while others are dying outside. Smoking."

Reigan's paternal grandfather died May 2 at Creighton University Medical Center of lung cancer.

The girl had seen people smoking outside the hospital and asked her mother, Jackie, why that was allowed. She seemed very irritated.

If it upsets you, Jackie said, you should do something about it.

So Reigan, a fourth-grader at Catlin Magnet Center, wrote a letter to Linda Ollis, the hospital's chief executive officer.

Her letter gets right to the point:

"This letter, I am writing because I think you should consider banning smoking from hospital grounds . . ."

Even secondhand smoke is dangerous, she writes.

"I miss my grandpa, and I don't want to see anybody else lose family members."

It isn't such a ridiculous thing Reigan is asking.

Alegent Health and Methodist Health System announced last year that their properties would be totally smoke-free by November.

At the time, Alegent's chief executive officer said it was the company's "ethical duty to no longer allow harmful behaviors like smoking to take place on our properties."

At the same time, Alegent started offering a free program to help employees and their spouses stop smoking. (Once the ban takes effect Nov. 16, said spokeswoman Lora Ullerich, employees who smoke might have to go their entire shifts without a cigarette.)

Almost 200 have signed up so far. Those who complete the program are rewarded with a \$100 medical savings account.

The Nebraska Medical Center has a similar free program for employees, including free nicotine-replacement products.

Going totally smoke-free, said spokeswoman Cherie Lytle, isn't realistic for the hospital, at least not yet.

Both the Nebraska and Creighton Medical Centers have smoking bans inside their buildings but allow smoking in designated areas outside.

The people Reagan saw were probably patients or visitors, said Creighton spokesman Ed Finan. The employee smoking area is not accessible by or visible to the public.

Reagan can't understand why *any* hospital would let people smoke *anywhere*.

Hospitals are supposed to be healthy places, she says. Why would you let patients go outside to smoke? Why would doctors and nurses smoke?

Why would *anybody* smoke?

She has lost both of her grandfathers to smoking. Her maternal grandfather died in 2004 of heart disease.

After he died, she tried to get her paternal grandfather to quit smoking. She knew he was smoking even when he said he was just going out for some fresh air because he would come in smelling like smoke.

"I said, 'Don't smoke! It can hurt your body.' But I don't think he listened."

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