

# The Journal of Medical Activism

Volume 8 Number 1

September 1993

## New DOC staff and extended hours:

"...also open nights,  
weekends, and holidays"

Like CNN, the all-news-network, DOC is on-target to become the first 24-hour-a-day international center for medical activism. Because monitoring the promoters of unhealthy products, their allies, and efforts to counteract them is a full-time job, the DOC office has been extending its hours to most nights, weekends, and holidays.

Joining DOC Executive Director Eric Solberg in Houston is Erik Vidstrand, formerly Executive Director of the Los Angeles Regional Tobacco Control Community Linkage Project and former Project Manager for Tobacco Control for the American Lung Association of Los Angeles County. Vidstrand, 36, takes over for Special Projects and Membership Manager Mary Paulsen who moved to Austin.

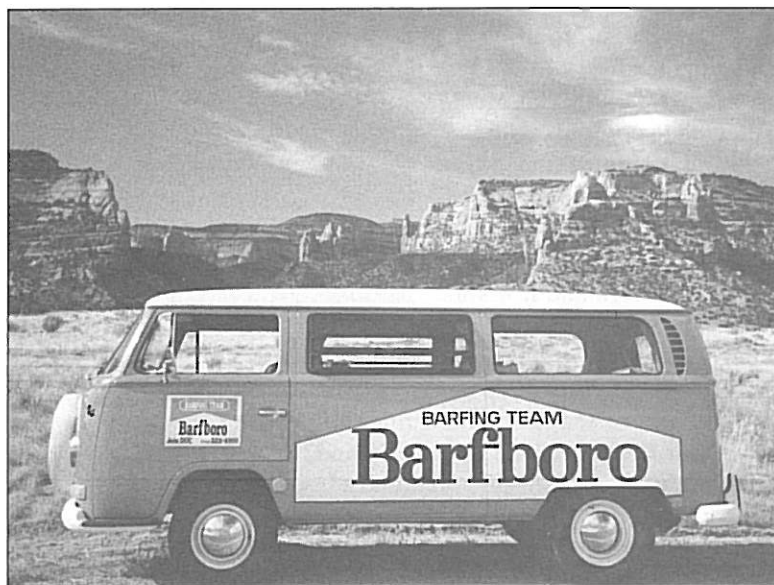
A native of Los Angeles, Vidstrand holds an undergraduate degree in child development and a Master of Public Health from California State University, Northridge. Like Solberg, he has extensive experience in coordinating educational opportunities for young people in their communities.

"I've been an ardent admirer of DOC for years and see it as a rare group that's willing to take important risks and act on the things traditional organizations only talk about. DOC is always accomplishing things that other organizations are saying couldn't be done."

Over the past year, DOC has especially benefited from the tireless efforts of Mary Paulsen and Teresa Maslonka.

## Barfboro Barfing Team takes on Marlboro Country

In its ongoing effort to counteract America's leading cause of death and disease--Marlboro--DOC has launched a national Barfboro campaign to ridicule a Philip Morris advertising theme called the Marlboro Adventure Team. At the center of attention is a 1968 Volkswagen



bus, renovated for use as the official Barfboro Barfing Team van, and its driver Erik Vidstrand who drove more than 10,000 miles in California, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado.

The Barfboro Barfing Team, designed to keep people laughing at Marlboro, began its odyssey on July 21 in Costa Mesa, California at the Orange County Fair. The Barfbmobile made its way through Los Angeles, the Santa Clarita and Antelope Valleys, then to Mammoth Lakes in the High Sierra.

In San Francisco, DOC of the Bay greeted the Barfing Team with a well-covered rally at Union Square. The Barfbmobile stopped in Sacramento to serve as the "official shuttle bus for the California State Legislature" to nudge legislators into dropping their acceptance of tobacco money. In several cities, including Santa Cruz, California, when the Barfbmobile encountered a Marlboro promotion, the cigarette pushers invariably packed up and left.

As the tour continued Eastward, the Barfbmobile became a singular attraction in the Painted Desert.

"Reactions from vacationing families who caught a glimpse of the Barfbmobile ranged from friendly waving and picture taking to fake barfing," recalled Vidstrand. "Everybody laughed."

Vidstrand was joined by Colorado DOC members for the Pope's International Youth Summit in Denver. The Barfbmobile was positioned along the pilgrimage of more than 100,000 young people from 60 countries on their way to see the Pope.

*Barfboro continued on p. 2*

# Barfing Team leaves 'em laughing

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The Barfboro promotion included giveaways of Barfboro Barfbags, posters, stickers, pins, and t-shirts. Kids and adults alike signed up to become official members of the Barfing Team.

The culmination of the summer tour took place in Grand Junction, Colorado, selected to coincide with the starting point of the cigarette company sponsored team. Joined by DOC Executive Director Eric Solberg, intern and law student Ron Turk, Denver DOC coordinator Dr. Jeff Cain, and Don Morris of Scottsdale, Arizona, the Barfbmobile rolled into Grand Junction on Labor Day Weekend for a rally and a community barf-b-que. Thousands viewed the Barfbmobile and fleet of Barfboro Barfing Team vehicles as they



Marlboro Adventure Team promotion.

traveled across Colorado. DOC paid for a quarter-page advertisement in the Grand Junction Daily Sentinel which advertised the Barfboro Team's arrival into town and announced the search for the Official 1994 Barfboro Barfing Team Pet Mascot. (A Golden Retriever/Labrador puppy was chosen as "Barfy the Wonder Dog.")

A secondary objective of the tour was to locate the Marlboro Adventure Team. DOC's Barfboro Barfing Team, equipped with a map, a calendar, and camera, chartered a Cessna (AirBarf One) to fly over Marlboro country where the tobacco adventure team was spotted marring the landscape near Moab, Utah.

Following a guest appearance at the American Academy of Family Physicians annual meeting in Orlando, the Fall '93 Barfboro Tour travels through

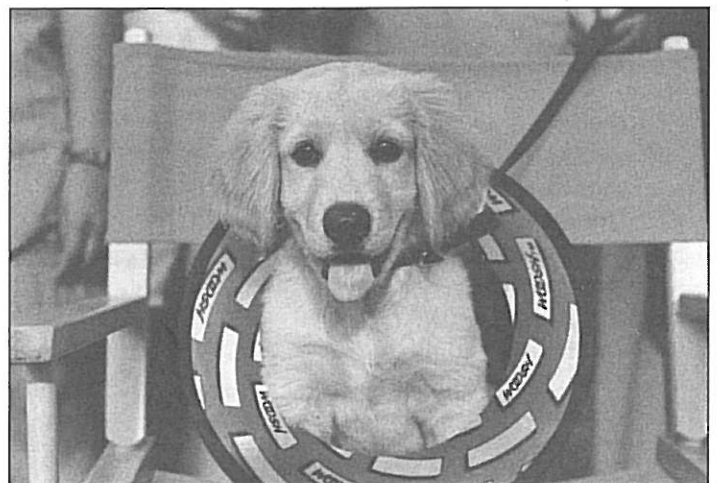
Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas. The Winter '94 Tour is scheduled for January with a trip to the Texas State Capitol. A commemorative book and a new line of official Barfing Team Gear will be available in time for the holidays.

To find out more about the Barfboro Barfing Team, call DOC at (713) 798-7729.

**The Journal of Medical Activism** is a publication of Doctors Ought to Care. DOC is a coalition of health professionals and other concerned individuals helping to educate the public, especially young people, about the major preventable causes of poor health and high medical costs. Our focus is the "killer habits" with a particular emphasis on counteracting the promotion of tobacco and alcohol. DOC's professional aim is to tap the highest possible level of commitment and involvement in their communities from physicians, medical students, other health professionals, business leaders and all other citizens. DOC is unique among health organizations in being solely concerned with health promotion, and has pioneered the concept of paid advertising aimed at reducing lethal lifestyles. For more information write to:

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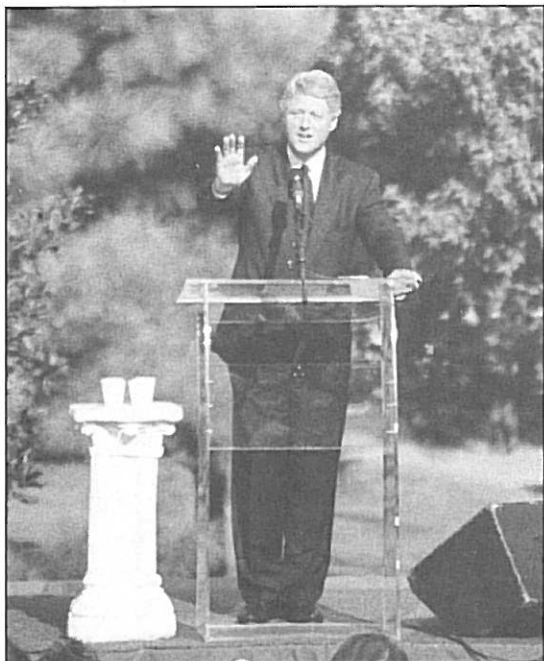
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Membership



Barfy the Wonder Dog--Official Team mascot.

## Harkin hits tobacco companies hard: A better bill to pay Bill's bills

An increase in the federal cigarette excise tax continues to be discussed in Washington and across the country. On January 1, 1993 the federal tax was



*President Clinton discussing health care reform*

increased by 4 cents to 24 cents per pack, an increase that was approved by Congress in 1990 after President Bush's Economic Summit.

Health groups in Washington, led by the Coalition on Smoking OR Health, have been advocating an increase in tobacco taxes by as much as \$2 per pack. However, despite President Clinton's apparent support for higher cigarette taxes, administration officials remain skeptical that an increase of that size is politically feasible.

While there is little doubt that the government sees cigarette taxes solely as a means for generating revenue, President Clinton is the first president to publicly support a cigarette tax

increase to be specifically earmarked to help pay for health care.

Earlier this year, Congressman Mike Andrews (D-TX) and Senator Bill Bradley (D-NJ) proposed legislation to raise the federal cigarette tax to \$1 per pack. Andrews' bill calls for earmarking 80% (about \$8 billion per year) for expanding Medicaid coverage for low-income pregnant women and children. Approximately 3% of revenue raised each year (\$275 million) would be dedicated to tobacco education programs.

Clearly, the intentions of politicians and health groups in Washington are well-meaning. But it is unfortunate that so much of the debate on cigarette taxes has focused entirely on passing the increases on to the user rather than directed toward better ways to tax the profits of manufacturers, wholesalers, and retailers of cigarettes and other tobacco products. In our opinion, contrary to popular belief, tobacco consumption is NOT correlated with rates of taxation (and certainly not at the proposed levels, as the accompanying article points out), but it IS correlated with the degree of promotion and efforts directed toward counteracting such promotion.

A bill introduced in 1992 by Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), would limit the tax deduction that tobacco companies are allowed for advertising expenses. In 1990, tobacco companies collectively spent more than \$3.9 billion on tobacco advertising, an amount that was fully deducted. It is unlikely that American citizens understand that tobacco advertising comes at the expense of tax payers.

Buoyed by the support of 35 Senate colleagues in 1992, Harkin is proposing an even stronger bill this year, with revenue earmarked for paid counter-advertising in the mass media. No other bill in the past two decades has so incurred the wrath of the tobacco industry which has outdone itself in recruiting erstwhile First Amendment protectionist organizations to do the arguing on behalf of cigarette advertisers. There's just one catch: Harkin has never talked about an ad ban (nor does DOC support such an approach). So it would appear that all the First Amendment defenders of tobacco advertising must be in it for the (tobacco) money.

## Raising Revenue vs. Saving Lives

Health groups advocating higher tobacco taxes have, for the most part, underestimated the strategies utilized by tobacco companies to undermine the impact of increases in tobacco taxes. Just as the tobacco industry has been able to ride out what it calls the "health scares" by introducing filtered and "low-tar" brands, so has it been adept at using advertising to subvert any disincentive for buying cigarettes following the imposition of an excise tax. The following are excerpts from an article written by Dr. Alan Blum (published in the February 28, 1986 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*) discussing the strategies employed by tobacco companies to respond to higher taxes on cigarettes:

- The introduction by every cigarette company of various reduced-price brands, and a shift in advertising budgets to emphasize what the industry calls "value-oriented" brands, such as Richland, Bucks, and Basic.

- An increase in rebate coupons in magazines and newspapers, and at point-of-purchase displays, good for between 20 cents and 60 cents off on a pack of cigarettes. [The tobacco industry spent more than \$1 billion on coupons in 1990.-ed]

- An increase of point-of-purchase displays in cooperation with national convenience stores, supermarkets, pharmacies, and gas stations.

- An increase in the distribution of free sample packages of cigarettes on city streets and at state fairs, civic functions, sports and cultural events.

- An annual increase of tobacco advertising expenditure between 11% and 15% which allows a larger tax deduction by tobacco companies.

- A decrease in price per package of cigarettes [Philip Morris, and later RJ Reynolds, recently announced a price-cut on their premium brands, but did not announce the fact that they had been increasing their prices for several months prior to their cut in prices.-ed]

- Product manipulation and cutting costs on manufacturing are on-going strategies employed by tobacco companies, allowing them to manufacture cigarettes at less cost.



## New Surgeon General backs Child health, stresses prevention

The following comments are excerpts from a letter written by DOC founder Alan Blum, M.D. and published by *USA Today*.



Surgeon General Elders and DOC founder Alan Blum, MD

"The appointment and confirmation of Dr. Joycelyn Elders to serve as Surgeon General comes at a crucial time for public health in the United States. Faced with a health-care crisis, this country must have leadership dedicated to restoring true primary prevention and primary care to the foundations of the health-care pyramid."

"A major challenge Elders will face is that prevention and health promotion are regarded by many as intellectually sim-

plistic and ineffective do-gooding. Efforts to prevent illness go largely unnoticed amid the headlines touting miracle cures and breakthroughs, largely generated by press releases and public-relations efforts of medical institutions and drug companies."

"Having shared the podium with Elders at two recent meetings, I became most aware of her ability to appropriately question the growing medicalization and politicization of health issues. She knows that efforts to prevent or reverse adverse health lifestyles are not to be led by health professionals alone."

### Public Relations vs. Public Health

For more than fifteen years, DOC has been working to counteract the promotion of unhealthy products and improve public health.

Through a multi-layered approach, involving office-based, school-based, and community-based health promotion, DOC has been successful in shifting the focus of the medical and public health professions in dealing with issues such as tobacco and alcohol use, and the way in which they are promoted in our society.

While other groups may have been reluctant to take action over the years, DOC has not been afraid to take risks in dealing with our nation's major preventable health issues. As health charities and other groups rely on the news media to promote their cause, DOC takes action.

The secret to DOC's success is its thousands of individual members. This broad-based support has provided the strength for DOC to continue to grow through collaborative efforts, creativity, and community action at a grassroots level. As DOC expands its efforts at a national and international level, the continuation, and ideally the acceleration, of DOC's efforts depends on your support.

## JOIN TODAY!

## Working Together to Fill the Cultural Gap

In an effort to work more closely with minority communities in counteracting tobacco and alcohol promotions, DOC is continuing to develop relationships and collaborate with minority organizations at the national, state, and community levels.

Much of DOC's work on minority health issues stems directly from the efforts of Dr. Blum as he began addressing and writing about such issues in the *U. S. Journal of Drug and Alcohol Dependence* during the late 1970's. In April 1985, as Editor of the *New York State Journal of Medicine*, Dr. Blum dedicated an entire theme issue of the *Journal* to "Minorities and Medicine." Dr. Blum was later responsible for encouraging Surgeon General C. Everett Koop to focus the 1987 meeting of the Interagency Committee on Smoking and Health on the "Impact of Smoking on Minority Populations," in which Dr. Blum provided the committee with the strategies utilized by the tobacco industry in targeting ethnic minority populations. Later that year, Dr. Blum was invited to address the First National Conference on Promoting the Health of African Americans and the First Biennial Symposium on Minorities and Cancer, which led to the production of DOC's video: "Sui-Genocide: The Killing of Minority Groups by the Tobacco Industry."

More recently, DOC chapters in several states have made it a priority to collaborate with and provide assistance to minority groups. DOC's California office, headed by Susan Smith, has served as a model for working closely with Hispanic and African-American coalitions in counteracting tobacco and alcohol promotions. In 1991, California DOC worked with the Mission Economic and Cultural Association (MECA) in San Francisco to find sponsors, other than tobacco and alcohol, for their annual Cinco de Mayo celebrations. In San Diego, the medical student-led DOC chapter initiated a program to provide health education among migrant workers, and in Los Angeles, Dr. Gary Kodel has worked with the Rebuild L.A. Coalition which was founded after the Los Angeles riots in 1992.

DOC's national office works closely with the National Coalition of Hispanic Health and Human Services Organizations (COSSMHO) and in 1992 DOC received COSSMHO's annual health promotion award for "exemplary service,

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## RJ Reynolds Attempts To Intimidate Researchers With Lawyers and Public Relations

The 1992 Spring issue of *DOC News and Views* reported on two research studies conducted by DOC members, which were published in the December 11, 1991 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*. In general, the studies focused on the influences that tobacco advertising has on children and teenagers. Specifically, the studies examined the influence of RJ Reynolds' Camel cigarette advertising and the marketing campaign including "Old Joe", the cartoon camel mascot used to promote Camel cigarettes in the United States since 1988.

Shortly after the research was published in *JAMA*, the studies' two principal investigators and primary authors, Dr. Paul Fischer and Dr. Joe DiFranza, became the subjects of personal harassment initiated by RJ Reynolds Tobacco Company. After a law suit was filed against RJ Reynolds by a group in California (not related to either researcher), RJ Reynolds issued a subpoena to both Dr. Fischer and Dr. DiFranza in order to obtain access to their research files.

The purpose of such requests became clear when RJ Reynolds successfully gained access to Dr. DiFranza's files last year. The tobacco company prepared glossy public relations packets containing misinformation about Dr. DiFranza's study and attempted to publicly discredit Dr. DiFranza by widely disseminating the packets to the news media, cigarette retailers, and to Dr. DiFranza's own research institution (only one paper, the *Winston-Salem Journal* in Winston Salem, North Carolina reported on RJ Reynolds complaints).

In the case involving Dr. Fischer, RJ Reynolds was not successful in obtaining Dr. Fischer's research files, as the courts decided that Dr. Fischer's files were not relevant to the law suit involving RJ Reynolds. However, the tobacco company put pressure on Dr. Fischer's institution, the Medical College of Georgia, to have the files turned over to the medical school and to the State's Attorney General. Despite threats of possibly losing

his position with the school's Department of Family Medicine, Dr. Fischer obtained a court restraining order against the medical college to prevent having to turn over his files.

The effort to protect Dr. Fischer's and Dr. DiFranza's scientific, peer reviewed work and their professional reputations and academic medical careers is an on-going battle. In order to assist Dr. Fischer, Dr. DiFranza, and other researchers, and to ensure their freedom to pursue scientific investigations without the fear of intimidation and legal cost, a Research Defense Fund has been established which will enable professional researchers to defend themselves against large corporations and other parties if the need arises. Initially, all funds raised will go toward helping Dr. Fischer and Dr. DiFranza with legal expenses related to their battle with RJ Reynolds.

All donations should be made to the "Research Defense Fund" and sent to P.O. Box 3694, Chapel Hill, NC 27515-3694.

## Hey DOC Chapters!

We still haven't received back surveys from many of you! In case you've forgotten what it was all about, we're trying to set up a directory of all the chapters in order to:

- 1) provide the national office and other chapters a contact person with whom we can both seek and share information;
- 2) provide all DOC members a local chapter contact if they wish to become involved in their area more directly;
- 3) encourage networking among similar types of chapters, i.e. resident-based, medical school-based, etc.

If you would like to have your chapter included in the directory but have misplaced your survey, you can send a note to the national office: **DOC, 5510 Greenbriar, Suite 235, Houston, TX 77005**. Please describe the events that your chapter has participated in, materials that you have developed, as well as a contact person. If you have any questions, or would like information on starting a DOC chapter, feel free to call Erik Vidstrand at (713) 798-7729.

## New DOC Video

DOC's latest video release, "Medicine vs. Madison Avenue," is finally available. The video, hosted by DOC founder Alan Blum, provides one of the best documentaries to date on the tobacco industry and its allies, and is appropriate for many age groups and audiences.

The production of the video was a collaborative effort between California DOC — directed by Susan Smith and Jim Smith — and DOC's national office. The DOC Tobacco Archive and International Resource Center, through more than 1,500 video tapes and hundreds of hours of original film, provided footage and other original materials for the video. The video was filmed in several U.S. cities in order to illustrate the tobacco industry's dynamic marketing strategies and sponsorship of sports, arts, and cultural events.

One purpose of the video was to show viewers exactly where, when, and how the tobacco industry does its work. For individuals who have only heard about but have not yet seen the tobacco industry in action, the video takes viewers out into the community, providing an up-close, and sometimes confrontational look at the tobacco industry.

Finally, the video expands the list of strategies beyond traditional pamphlets and lectures to include community based strategies involving monitoring and counteracting the tobacco industry and its allies.

In order to make the video affordable, DOC is charging only \$100 for the film, which includes the workshop guide, *Medical Activism*. The guide provides additional information for discussion and outlines key strategies for ending the tobacco pandemic.

Orders should be sent to DOC at: P. O. Box 540267, Houston, Texas 77254-0267. Discounts are available for multiple orders, and any questions should be directed to (713) 798-7729.

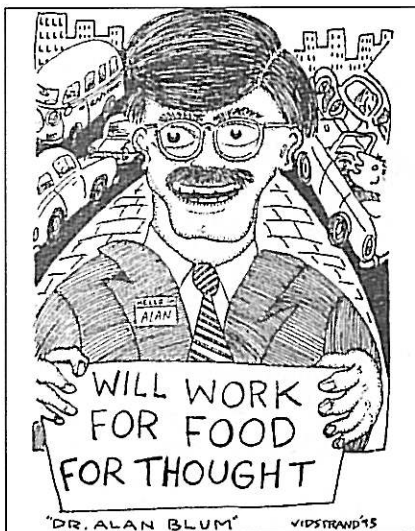
## AAFP honors DOC founder with Public Health Award

On October 7, 1993 at the 45th Annual Convention of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) in Orlando, Florida Alan Blum, MD, DOC founder and chairman, received the AAFP Second Public Health Award.

Upon receiving the award, Dr. Blum made the following statement:

"Without question, the Academy has nurtured DOC's efforts more than any other organization. Two past presidents of the Academy, Dr. Sam Nixon and Dr. Bob Higgins, were especially encouraging during DOC's early years."

"I am indebted to Drs. Tom Houston and Rick Richards for their unselfish dedication to see DOC grow into an international organization."



"I would also like to thank Dr. Bob Rakel (Department of Family Medicine, Baylor College of Medicine) and Dr. Bob Graham (Executive Vice President, AAFP) for their support, as well as thousands of physicians who have contributed to DOC's success over the past 16 years."

"Most people don't know that my father, the late Leon Blum, MD, who inspired my efforts on the tobacco issue, was a member of the forerunner organization of the AAFP from its inception, and I am forever grateful for his vision."

"Lastly, without the support of my wife, Doris, DOC would not have survived."

*continued from p. 4*

dedication, and commitment in promoting health and well-being in the nation's Hispanic communities." This marked the first time the award has been presented to a non-Hispanic organization.

DOC is also working with the U.S. Indian Health Service (IHS) at national, regional, and reservation levels. The work of Dr. Tom Welty in South Dakota, Jarrett Baker in North Dakota, and that of Bruce Leonard and Dr. Chuck North in New Mexico has provided DOC with valuable assistance and has helped foster relationships with Native American communities.

Despite some progress, there are many remaining challenges in dealing with tobacco and alcohol use among minority groups. Efforts to counteract the promotion of tobacco and alcohol in ethnic communities must be intensified. DOC is looking for individuals and organizations working in minority communities or inner-cities who want to become more active. Those interested in collaborating with DOC, or who feel DOC may be able to provide some assistance to existing efforts should call (713) 798-7729.



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