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March 2, 1984

R. E. Ritts, Jr., M.D.
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Editor
New York State Journal of Medicine
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Dear Alan:

Thank you so much for the special cigarette pandemic issue of the Journal. It is breathtaking in its scope, so to speak.

Curiously, it arrives as I am a week into my own first no smoking effort in 30+ years. I wish that I could say why I have not done this sooner or even why I have at this point. The withdrawal from 40-50 cigarettes a day is not especially pleasant, nor is it especially agonizing. I had expected to feel much better, if only morally, but it would probably not be seemly to be completely euphoric.

Flogging the AMA on their vested stance is probably barren and, clearly, Rosenberg's piece was balanced. Nonetheless, given the amount of space and the moderate presentation tends to minimize the very significant and peculiar role of the AMA in the smoking and health issues of the 50's and 60's.

Indeed, at some point when the AMA Board's collective back was being pressed against the proverbial hot pipes (in the late 50's, I think), they said cigaret smoking was a hazard because smokers occasionally caused fires.

It would have been an interesting exercise to examine the activities of the Scientific Advisory Board on Smoking and Health of the AMA-ERF. All of my records are in storage so I am not even sure if I have retained them, but it was evident that the Advisors awarded themselves fairly handsome grants. At one point it was a very considerable percentage of the total funds. I never could learn how much overhead or administrative expenses the AMA charged the grant. Even more compelling would be an objective examination of the research underwritten by the \$10 million (and I believe really somewhat more was actually given). There were some interesting proposals made along with explorations for the "safe cigarette," a vexing problem because this implied the then current cigarettes were not really safe. I knew this should have been beneath the dignity of serious consideration but there was a chronic institutional affliction of the

Alan Blum, M.D.

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emperor's new clothes syndrome about at the time. It was the first time I had ever encountered doublespeak in real life and real time, as the slightly old and newer expressions go.

Congratulations on an especially fine issue (Gitlitz's was a bit tedious) and for the extraordinary planning and effort required to produce it.

Warm regards.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "R. E. Ritts, Jr.", written in dark ink. The signature is fluid and somewhat stylized, with a prominent loop at the end.

R. E. Ritts, Jr., M.D.

RER/klS