

# The Examiner

## What's up DOC?

### It's not a bird, . It's not a plane. It's SUPERHEALTH 2000!

A young girl of 14 enters her local health department and requests a pregnancy test.

When asked why, she states that she has missed three periods. When asked if she's been sexually active, she says, "yes." When asked why she didn't use a contraceptive, she replies, "I didn't think I needed one, he used an I.U.D."

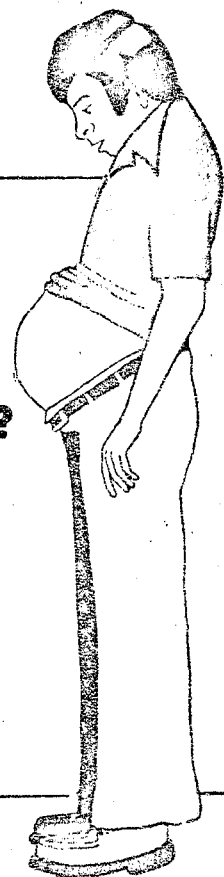
This may sound like a joke, but it's not. It's the pitiful truth. And if current trends continue, 40 percent of the girls now 14 will be pregnant before they are 20. If all teenage pregnancies were analyzed, the list of direct and indirect factors would be pretty lengthy. But the two most prominent causes would surely be peer pressure and ignorance. However, if these peer groups had the foresight to see into the future, the pressure would probably cease leaving ignorance or inaccurate knowledge as the primary reason for the rise in teenage pregnancies. This is not the only way Americans, especially young Americans, are destroying their physical and mental health because of their inability to see the whole picture. Statistics have proven that between 50 to 80 percent of death and disease today is life style related.

For this reason, a national group of family practice residents and other physicians endorsed by the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Family Physicians have organized and taken the responsibility to educate the public about prevention of these life style related conditions. The organization is called DOC which is an acronym for Doctors Ought to Care and they do care.

Capt. John W. (Rick) Richards, M.D. family practitioner at Eisenhower Medical Center, Fort Gordon, Ga., is the national vice-president of the organization which now has local chapters in 19 states. Richards, a native of South Carolina, is the founder of the state chapter there which is coordinated by the South Carolina Family Practice Residents Association (SCFPRA). In less than a year it has become the national show case for DOC. He has just sold the Department of Family Practice at this facility on the DOC program, and a local chapter is in the formative stages in the Fort Gordon area.

The number one preventable cause of death is tobacco," Richards said. "Tobacco claims over 375,000 lives each year. Alcohol is second to tobacco claiming over 205,000 lives annually. Equally incredible is that Americans are pouring in excess of \$75 billion (over \$1000 per tax payer) a year for the damage directly caused by tobacco and alcohol alone, not to mention other life style related diseases. Only two cents out of every health care dollar spent in the United States goes toward prevention, however. As residents, these frustrating facts were drilled into our heads everyday. Almost every illness we treated was caused or potentiated by daily living habits. Thus we (DOC) felt it part of our responsibility to educate people. We are not trying to regulate standards of moral conduct or ban the use or sale of tobacco and alcohol. We only want the public to see the whole picture, not just that portrayed in the advertisements. We want them to read the labels before purchasing the product. We

Would you  
be more careful  
if it were you  
that got pregnant?



*Contraception means  
never having to say  
you're sorry!*

SC  
FPRA  
Doc  
South Carolina Family Practice Residents Association

Graphic posters are part of the program.

# DOCS: They do care . . .

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want that teenage boy to realize the legal implications of fathering a child. We want them to know that withdrawal from nicotine is as hard as withdrawal from heroin. We want them to see what it's like to be an alcoholic before they take their first drink.

"We work mostly with school age children because these are the impressionable years when 'killer habits' are picked up. But we do work with adults upon request."

Each chapter of DOC sets up its own objectives and projects. However, DOC's national theme for this year has been "Superhealth 79". The SCFPRA set up a speaker's bureau whereby family practice residents with audiovisual aids went into the schools and communities of South Carolina and told the DOC story. Posters were passed out in the schools. Radio and TV spots were aired over local stations which were recorded by high school students. If you were listening to a Spartanburg station, for example, you might hear Simon Garfunkle singing "50 ways to leave your lover" followed by a teenage voice saying "smoking . . . slow motion suicide . . . is just one of those ways." Other methods were T-shirts and buttons bearing the inscription "Superhealth 79" which were passed out in the parks to children who were up-to-date on their immunizations.

"We use sex, humor and facts to get our message across," said Richards. "We

are pushing a product — health; we plan to use the same methods proven successful by those who promote unhealthy lifestyles." The Tobacco Industries have a \$500 million yearly (\$2.2 million daily) advertising budget. It's not easy to a pro-health, non-profit organization to compete with something like that."

Richards strongly feels that "magazines and newspapers should exercise a little more moral dedication to their readers rather than financial dedication to their advertisers because their advertisements are grossly misleading. Furthermore, they don't warn that even though the person in the alcohol ad is young and healthy looking now, that if he continues to drink, he won't be. They don't seem to care that it is the 9-year old child who is looking at the ad with mystique, not the 40-year old adult who knows what it is to be hooked on cigarettes."

If you live in the Fort Gordon area, civilian or military, and would like DOC to come into your community or school, call Capt. Karl Snyder at 791-3532. You will be helping them lay another milestone in their ultimate goal, which according to Richards, is "to prevent a new generation from adopting pathologic habits and to decrease the incidence of current detrimental behavior by altering priorities and social attitudes within both peer groups and the family unit."

(Story by Jan honomichl, DDEAMC, PAO office, Fort Gordon, Ga. 30905)