

Why do you go to a doctor? Well, because you're sick, or feel something might be not quite right and the doctor probably can fix it. Dr. Alan Blum is president of an organisation called DOC which really stands for Doctors Ought to Care and in essence the organisation is made of physicians who feel that healing the sick is fine, but they also have a duty to try and prevent that sickness by pointing out some of the major causes of disease which can almost always be traced to bad health practices. Therefore Blum feels it's a physician's duty to try and persuade the general public to stop some of these most unhealthful practices. Blum is a family physician who is a Morris Fishbein Fellow in medical journalism for The Journal of the American Medical Association. He said his concern about concentrating too little on prevention was heightened when he started speaking to groups of former drug addicts who are participating in a rehabilitation programme.

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"Here was a county drug rehabilitation programme in which all these people were being given a second chance to reform and to overcome their serious addictive problems and one thing struck me; that they were very concerned about questions regarding their health. Here were people that were not very healthy -- people that had abused their health -- they were concerned about their sexual problems, they were concerned about drug problems, they were concerned about things like smoking, of all things. And I noticed when I started off one day, there were about 35 individuals. Almost everyone in the room was smoking at the exact time I started and I happened to start making some analogies between drug abuse and cigarette smoking...things that they hadn't ever really considered -- things that I, perhaps, hadn't even made an analogy toward -- and I noticed a stack of magazines - Playboy, Time, Newsweek -- and I started passing them out and having them take a look at the only addiction in our society that is not only not discouraged but is actively promoted."

Two addictions that seem to be actively promoted are smoking and drinking. In a short time, however, the addicts in their rehabilitation programmes no longer smoked after they were in a session with Blum; so he said he thought that that sort of a prevention programme might work on other people as well. The health awareness programmes, however, that were being used in the area didn't seem to be very effective.

"I saw that there was a woeful lack of ethical health information. It was basically the National Enquirer mentality which is something that we tend to laugh at; and that really isn't something that should be laughed at

because it's not just about psychic puppies, and how your salad reveals your personality. The important thing about the National Enquirer is that that's about one-third of any given issue -- health, health information."

And he says that although he may not agree with all the material that's presented in the National Enquirer, it does have an approach that seems to be effective with many people, and there really is a great interest in health information. Blum had his first opportunity to argue about prevention and the merits and evils of cigarette smoking with an individual from the tobacco institute. This was on a radio programme and Blum said he felt he did a terrible job.

"Here I wanted to talk about what I was seeing in the hospital every day. What they wanted to talk about was this wonderful old custom that people have been using for thousands of years. And, 'doctor, can't you allow people to have their little joys in life,' and so forth."

Blum said that he soon realised that the people who won the debates were not those who raised their voices in indignation but the very calm and smooth individuals like those from the Tobacco Institute. Those were the successful debaters. So in the interest of a Prevent Illness campaign, DOC was formed -- Doctors Ought to Care.

"I think the 'ought' is not a conditional -- it's an imperative -- because we're the ones who do care. We see what's going on not just from smoking and drinking and poor nutrition, but the active promotion of these major preventable causes of death in our society."

More tomorrow night on Prevention, on FOCUS 96-5 here on WFMR.

This week on FOCUS 96-5 the topic is Prevention -- a special kind of health care. An ever-increasing number of physicians in this country seem to be putting a greater importance on prevention of certain health problems rather than simply dealing with a patient's disease when it occurs. Naturally, many physicians will also tell you that they're provided with little opportunity to prevent a disease because a well person never even comes near them. This problem is somewhat aggravated in many instances by an individual's insurance programme; for example, a woman who gets tested for cervical cancer once every year or two years, will pay that \$35 to \$40 fee herself because she's simply getting a medical test as a matter of routine. Cervical cancer is the sort of cancer that's almost always curable with early detection. However, the person who ignores the recommended routine of a pap test and after going to a doctor for the first time in 8 years is diagnosed as having advanced cervical cancer, will have all her medical costs paid by that same insurance programme because she's being treated for a disease.

Dr. Alan Blum is a family physician who is president of a relatively new organisation called DOC -- Doctors Ought to Care. He was one of those people who got tired of seeing certain life-threatening diseases every day which are avoidable for the most part for most people, providing they pay a certain degree of attention to maintaining a healthful lifestyle. Blum says that DOC is aimed at young people and teenagers -- an attempt to make them aware of their choices.

.. "To decide what they're going to do when they get a little older, and how they're going to live their lives, and maybe just possibly how they can help another individual in their communities. That's really what we're all about. We're not anti-drinking, anti-smoking, anti-teenage sex, anti-anything. I think we're very much anti-rip-off -- pro-health, you might say."

Blum says that DOC feels that there are many institutionalised kinds of advertising that the organisation doesn't believe in and the intent is to fight the ads on their own terms. DOC purchases public service ads in order to put forth the organisation's point of view -- the same way most ads for most products put forth a viewpoint. One example, says Blum, is magazines aimed at pre-teenagers and teenage girls. He says that from the heavy promulgation of cosmetics ads the message is that you have to wear make-up, citing one slogan, "Most 12-year olds no longer do their colouring with crayons."

"Make-up. You've got to have make-up ads in teenage magazines that are aimed at the 10-14-year old. You've got to not show them anything that they can do to be satisfied with themselves as they are. You've got to make them try to be someone -- in essence like everybody else -- but someone that Madison Avenue would have them be perceived as, as an individual."

Blum also feels that when a corporation owns many subsidiaries, it's easy for one arm of the company to be involved in making a product that causes health problems for many people, while another arm makes a product designed to deal with some of the same health problems. Blum says that while it was certainly not the original intent of the company, the situation often now exists, regardless.

"You have one hand, the corporation owning the National Outdoor company -- the largest outdoor seller of alcohol and cigarettes on billboards -- and the same company makes Theolair, a drug for patients who have lung problems. I have shares in the company so I think I can be a critic because I think it's important they divest themselves of this kind of absolute conflict of interest."

Dr. Blum says that the general philosophy that's common and yet bad for people is the idea that complaints can be cured with a pill, or any other number of items that are successfully promoted as the catalyst that turns a person's life around into success and health. Many people continue to search all their lives for that right catalyst while ignoring some basic principles for good health.

"What we're talking about today is what grandma knew all along. We're talking about good old moderation. I'm not saying 'don't smoke, don't drink, don't eat bad foods'. I'm saying 'do anything you want in life, but do it moderately and do it with common sense'."

More tomorrow night with Dr. Alan Blum of DOC -- Doctors Ought to Care, on FOCUS 96-5 here on WFMR.

Dr. Alan Blum is president of DOC, an organisation started by three doctors in 1977. The acronym stands for Doctors Ought to Care. Blum says that moderation is something that most people fail to practise, and that one way to reduce medical costs is to improve the population's health. Blum says that DOC is feuding with such organisations as the American Cancer Society and the American Heart Association to try and make them give more attention to prevention, changing people's attitudes, and not so much on research for cure. He says the public has an image of doctors as half producing wonder-drugs and miracle cures, and the other half coming down with malpractice suits. Somewhere in-between -- the kind of old-fashioned doctor approach, where the physician gets to know the families, has time for them and expects a bit from the patients, too. We know the major preventable causes of bad health and high medical costs. Some of the biggest concerns that DOC has is the very clever ads for establishment products that can really do people harm, like cigarettes and junk food. Although Blum's anti-cigarette commercials are famous for their approach, 31-year old Blum is no fan of marijuana, either.

"People unfortunately have an idea that the verdict isn't in, that it really is much safer than smoking tobacco, and it's not addictive. This is such hokum. Marijuana is one of the most potent drugs there is. It's a frightening future that we face if we go about continuing to encourage through with-it kind of jokes, through insensitivity to children. And if the people that write ^{commercials} in our lives don't see that 9-year old children are watching that, then they better think again."

Blum says that one of the things that concerns him is that the most effective form of education oftentimes is through commercials, advertising and promotions.

"We are promoting a concept that you've got to get stoned; you've got to get behind the wheel; you've got to drive; and you've got to at least smoke a couple of joints when you go to a party; and it's a kind of backward mentality that has been foisted by people that have a great, heavy stake in this -- the "high" culture, without sounding prohibitionistic, outdoes any corporate rip-off I can think of, in terms of giving you literally nothing in return for your dollar."

As I drove Dr. Blum from the depot to our studios he pointed to a billboard on Capitol Drive, and he peered out the window and said, "Oh, I missed it. What was that in the corner on the bottom of that sign?" Responding dutifully like a good Milwaukeean, I said, "Well, I missed it, but let's go round the block and see it again." He looked at me and smiled and said, "You missed it. That's exactly my point." Squeezed down on the lower corner of the billboard advertising a brand of cigarette appeared the Surgeon-General's warning in small white letters.

"The proof of the pudding is when you deal with an issue like cigarette advertising and you camouflage that hokey little warning by putting it on the bottom in half-an-inch on a full-page ad, you're really saying you don't want people to get the small print; you don't want them to read the fine print in this society. Most advertising is not aimed at the consumer of that product. Most advertising, particularly for cigarettes and alcohol, is aimed at the individual like me. The individual like most, let's say, public radio listeners,

or classic music radio station types, public TV types, that are going to get angry about issues; but if they're treated in a certain fashion, if they're treated with pretty images, if they're treated with culture, they will ignore an issue. And most cigarette advertising is really aimed not to sell the product, but to buy off social acceptance -- to make people believe that there is nothing anyone can do about it."

Originally, smoking was considered socially daring for some, but there was no thought about ill-effects. Opera singers would advertise Lucky Strikes and Camels, in the 1920s, saying 'Smoking before I sing relaxes me -- makes me sound my best'. Blum says he is not trying to eradicate cigarettes or cigarette smoking, but he wants to see the other side -- the DOC side -- express its view effectively, saying that doctors ought to care about the fate of young people at least as much as Pepsi Cola or Philip Morris does.

More tomorrow night on FOCUS 96-5 here on WFMR.

Dr. Alan Blum is one of the founders of a group called DOC, for Doctors Ought to Care. He said he kept seeing far too many people dying in hospital of preventable disease. For example, one of the three major risk factors for heart attack is cigarette smoking. That's what made him think about the need for prevention, but a very specific kind of prevention. He said the difference between preaching prevention and practising it is ^{the} difference between do-gooding and really doing well. More importantly, Blum says that a preventive society means a shift away from dull government health pamphlets, and 2-in-the-morning public service announcements from the health charities, and towards stepped-up media coverage of measures which encourage good health. Recently Blum talked with a hospitalised emphysema patient, a 60-year old woman, who said when she started smoking it was very much 'the thing to do'.

"I was asking her. I said, 'Do you smoke?' She said, 'Of course.' She said, 'That's why I had to stop work'. I said, 'You had to stop work?' She said, 'Yes, the emphysema from smoking. My doctor told me that.' And I said, 'Well, when did you start?' She said, 'Oh, when I was 15'. I said, 'Why did you start?' She said, 'What do you mean Why? Everybody else was smoking -- why not. It was the thing to do.' 'What brand did you smoke?' 'Camels, of course. Camels, because that was the In brand.' As a matter of fact, one of the early ads for Camels was 'Camels come to the aid of the party -- any party, where the main idea was to be joyous and carefree.' They were the first industry to give women 'equal smoking rights.' And she then switched over the Luckies for a time. In the 50s she said, 'Oh, I went to the filters, because they were supposed to be safer.' Safer than what, fresh air?

"Then I said, 'What brand were you smoking last?' She said, 'I went to the Carltons because they had less tar'. But you can see over the age that people have been using products specifically because they were told to do it. There's no moderation involved."

DOC -- Doctors Ought to Care -- is interested in making people aware of choices that they can make that will most probably affect how long they will live. The organisation is concerned about many poor health practices in addition to heavy cigarette smoking, but Blum believes that telling people to act healthy doesn't have quite the same ring to it that a Madison Avenue production number filled with attractive people promoting an unhealthy product does. So his objective is to try and get across information about staying healthy by using some of the catchy and brilliant advertising techniques the way a successful business often does. One of the most effectively presented products above all is cigarettes. The tobacco industry is also very much in tune with the mood of the people, and has masterfully adapted and changed its advertising to keep up with the latest trend information. So it's not surprising that the tobacco industry provides Blum with inspiration for a pro-health campaign. In fact he says one of his best people in DOC is a chain-smoking physician and that that physician ended up teaching Blum consumer information he'd never been aware of.

"He'd been concerned about the chemicals used in the manufacture of cigarettes. And he wanted to know more about that. He noticed this one night when he was at a party where they were smoking marijuana and when they rolled the joints, the joints burned out when you didn't take a toke on them."

But he noticed at the same time that once a cigarette was lighted, it would continue burning while even sitting in an ashtray the whole time. Some chemicals are added to cigarettes to they'll burn smoothly without any effort on the part of the smoker.

"Chemical additives that are used have a very serious danger from fire, but they also contain problems that we are not fully aware of. You have 40-year old men retiring early; you have people dropping dead of lung cancer like Wilkemen Cooper, the most famous fashion model of all time, last month dying at age 40 -- just 2 packs a day. If Wilkemen had died of some esoteric disease like tsutsugamuchi fever we'd have tsutsugamuchi fever telethons and walkathons and we'd get brownies to sit and read books all day long and collect money. The important thing is we're dealing with the most prominent cause of death that is preventable. We're not going to deny the right to promote in a legal society any product as long as it is legal; but the the same time we can begin to band together to take a look at what we're doing to ourselves."

Dr. Alan Blum, president of DOC, Doctors Ought to Care.
More tomorrow night on FOCUS 96-5 on WFMR.

"Eat your spinach, drink your milk, get to bed early and if I catch you smoking...." These commands hardly seem revolutionary; in fact they sound like what many children have been hearing since the beginning of time. Yet such well-meaning parental imperatives are the subject of a major document issued recently by the Department of Health Education & Welfare entitled, "The First Surgeon-General's Report on health promotion and disease prevention." Dr. Alan Blum quotes from the article, saying, "Americans are killing themselves needlessly by smoking, drinking, poor diet and preventable accidents." It urges people to start a second public health revolution directed at curbing avoidable causes of bad health, in much the same way that there was an earlier health revolution at the turn of the century leading to medications and sanitation measures which reduced the toll of tuberculosis, polio and other infectious diseases.

Dr. Alan Blum is president of DOC, for Doctors Ought to Care. He says that better health can lower the cost of medical care and although the AMA, an organisation which Blum belongs to, says that they are trying to lower the costs of medical care, Blum feels that they can do much more.

"The major issue that the AMA is proud to say that it represents is the cost of medical care -- that it's driving down the cost of medical care. Cost containment is the major issue of the AMA. Well, you don't have cost containment until you prevent the problems that are causing people to be in the places where the charges are made; and the charges come mainly from hospitals, secondly from physicians, and thirdly I would say from a great variety of accelerated inflationary costs."

But Blum says we don't have enough prevention.

"There is primary prevention such as brushing your teeth so that you don't get cavities. Secondary prevention is a pap smear that will diagnose something that may already be there and you might prevent it from getting worse. Then you have what is the vast majority of medical care in this country, in medical practice and medical teaching, is tertiary prevention. It's a mockery even to call it prevention, because it's not. It means medical care when you're already sick and will try to prevent you from getting worse and will optimally try to get you back where you were; that's not prevention -- that's rehabilitation. It's to say that the medical profession is behind the times -- the times were maybe back when grandma was knowing what was good for us, and they've been caught up in technology and medications and pharmaceuticals."

DOC's 10 point proposal for lowering health costs include insurance companies should give discounts for people who have lifestyles that include not smoking. Newspapers should file a precedent in refusing ads, such as their refusals for x-rated movies, by rejecting other ads for what Blum considers to be unhealthful habits. "The city administration," he says, "should study and make public the cigarette and alcohol related health costs borne by the public." He says that the Federal Trade Commission and Congress should investigate the use of long-burning and other hazardous chemicals in cigarette manufacture. Additives that are responsible for no fewer than 2,000 preventable fire deaths each year. Doctors Ought to Care -- DOC -- with Alan Blum. For more information, send a stamped self-addressed envelope to FOCUS WFMR 711 West Capitol Drive, Milwaukee, 53206. I'm Susan Wirth for FOCUS 96-5.

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