

## DOCTORS OUGHT TO CARE

by Ronald Sautter, M.D.

"In a medical first in this country, a doctors group has wrestled sponsorship of a sports team away from a tobacco company. . . ."

So started an article in the Chicago Sun-Times of April 10, 1988 describing how an organization called Doctors Ought to Care (DOC) had taken on the responsibility of sponsoring the U.S. Boomerang Team in the World Cup competition in Australia earlier this year.

Physicians sponsoring boomerang throwers? To make sense out of this unusual relationship, a bit of DOC's history is in order. DOC was started around 1978 by a group of physicians, residents, and medical students at the Medical College of Georgia, led by Dr. Alan Blum. Dr. Blum was concerned about the lack of medical training regarding primary prevention with patients, especially with children and teenagers. The organization was formed in order to organize commitment on the part of health professionals toward positive health promotion, to help physicians educate the public about preventable causes of poor health, and to tap creative abilities of young people in countering mass media advertising that promoted unhealthy lifestyles and products.

Over the years, these efforts have led most often to battles against tobacco and alcoholic beverage conglomerates. Through DOC, many physicians and medical students have helped organize talks to all age groups and various professional organizations, sponsored athletic events ("Emphysema Slims" Tennis Tournament as a counter to "Virginia Slims"), produced large collections of educational material (slides, books, articles, ads) regarding health promotion, and developed the idea of "Superhealth 2000" with the goal of helping children follow-up cognitive information regarding health with creative expression, such as poster contests, video and audio production, drama, and organization of public health fairs.

So, when DOC heard that the U.S. Boomerang Team was hesitant to sign a contract for sponsorship from the Phillip Morris Tobacco Company, Dr. Blum saw the opportunity to continue DOC's efforts to counter tobacco advertising by committing DOC to sole sponsorship of the team. Granted, DOC realizes that sponsorship of a boomerang team will not counter-balance all the tobacco and alcohol activity in sports, but it is viewed as a start, a breakthrough in trying to separate sports from tobacco and alcohol money. As a result of favorable press coverage, DOC already has other athletes asking to carry DOC's no-smoking logo and seeking sponsorship.

This August at the annual Scientific Assembly, the IAFP Congress of Delegates passed a resolution to recognize and encourage DOC in its efforts to counter tobacco and alcohol promotion, especially among the young. The Congress also voted to encourage IAFP members to support DOC and its objectives of health-positive promotion. If you are interested in learning more about DOC, or want to find out how you can become more involved, you may contact DOC at:

Doctors Ought to Care  
HH-101  
Medical College of Georgia  
Augusta, GA 30912  
(404) 721-2269

And how did the U.S. Boomerang team do in the World Cup competition, you ask? I heard from another IAFP member that the team won!