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Tobacco-industry seditious

Dr. Alan Blum, famous seditious and winner of the Surgeon General's Medal of Honor, was preaching sedition last week to University of Cincinnati med students.

That's okay, since the Houston-based med prof follows a medical model. Though his medical model is closer to *M.A.S.H.* than to *Marcus Welby M.D.*, Blum founded the activist physicians group called DOC (Doctors Ought to Care) in 1977 and has been spreading sedition against the tobacco industry ever since.

After hearing him speak, I wonder if his group isn't misnamed: Shouldn't it be called Doctors Ought to Counteradvertise (or Counterattack)?

DOC was the group that brought back counteradvertising against tobacco ads. Instead of Virginia Slims, DOC runs ads for Emphysema Slims. Instead of banal "I-smoke-for-taste" ads, DOC produces "I-smoke-for-smell" ads featuring a macho male with a cigarette stuck up his nose. It cracks school kids up.

Like a Johnny Appleseed of preventive medicine, Blum passes out stickers wherever he goes, so he and his merry band can slap them on offensive tobacco ads. The stickers bear the universal prohibition symbol over a Marlboro horseman, plus this warning:

"Many of the ads in this publication are misleading, deceptive and/or a rip-off. For example, smoking does not make one glamorous, macho, successful or athletic. It does make one sick, poor and dead. We care about you and your health. Love, DOC."



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Some of UC's baby docs are already Blum converts. When second-year med student Shari Barkin speaks for DOC at inner city schools here, she passes around plastic bags containing preserved human lungs, one healthy, the other diseased from smoking. It freaks students out. DOC wants to incite anger and outrage against tobacco companies, only Barkin finds teens instead get mad at parents and teachers who smoke.

Remember the ads: More doctors prefer Camels? Tobacco firms still use the medical model to make phony health claims about filters, low tar, menthol and other nonsense. Menthol is an anesthetic that deadens throat tissue so smokers smoke more. Blum throws the medical model back at them. He lists as cancer's seven warning signals: Philip Morris, RJR-Nabisco, Loews, Brown & Williamson, American Brands, Liggett & Myers and United States Tobacco Co.

Blum calls them drug-pushers and child-molesters. Though he believes Big Tobacco is more powerful than ever with food company takeovers and tobacco products the top U.S. export, he still believes the media could end smoking by heaping proper ridicule and contempt on the tobacco barons out to get our children.

The trouble is, he says: "We are not fighting fire with fire; we're fighting fire with do-goodism."

Blum calls Tom Selleck, Ceryn Tiegs, Danny Sullivan "drug pushers" for appearing in tobacco ads. He calls Marge Schöttl a "drug pusher" for allowing tobacco billboards in Riverfront Stadium where kids see them. He blasts Jesse Jackson for not speaking out against tobacco, the leading cause of death among blacks. He likens the tobacco industry to a killer virus, like AIDs, constantly changing its code.

DOC sponsors counterad-writing contests and quizzes (Q: What's the difference between the tobacco industry and the Mafia? A: The Mafia has a code of ethics). DOC's Australian counterparts sabotaged a Marlboro Man contest by entering a man who smoked through the tracheotomy hole in his throat.

DOC's pranksterism is infectious. All sorts of schemes come to mind: A mock wax museum of celebrity tobacco pushers (Selleck, Jack Webb...). An Emphysema Olympics. Wanted posters for tobacco execs. Tobacco-flavored yogurt. Ash-tray-flavored breath mints. "What I could have bought had I not smoked" ads. Counter-vending machines that issue lung samples. Betty Ford clinics for child smokers.

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