

# HUMAN ECOLOGY



A MAGAZINE  
FOR THE FRIENDS OF

**Lutheran General  
Hospital**

PARK RIDGE, ILLINOIS

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## Spring 1981



*Spooing the Image Makers*

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**On our cover**

What are these people doing? They're posing for a "We smoke for smell" poster campaign to be used by DOC (Doctors Ought to Care), an organization that thinks advertising is undermining our image of good health. For more on DOC and the M.D. behind it, turn to page 16.

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# HUMAN ECOLOGY & YOU

We believe in the philosophy of Human Ecology, the understanding and treatment of human beings as whole persons in light of their relationships to God, themselves, their families and the society in which they live.

Each May, the American Hospital Association celebrates National Hospital Week. This year, the week of May 10-16 is designated with the theme, "Looking Well into the Future."

The future is not always predictable, but major health issues are being forecast. They include an ongoing concern over hospital costs, legislation, regulations and technology. Another likelihood is the continuation of a growing number of persons who are 65-years-old and older. The average life expectancy of the average person born in this country is 73 years.

Lutheran General, aware of these trends in health care, has renewed its spirit of the philosophy of Human Ecology, care for the whole person.

Prevention is the byword as this institution seeks further opportunities to serve persons outside the hospital setting as well as within. Identifying and preventing illness and disease not only helps individuals avoid complicated problems and hospitalization, but also helps contain hospital costs.

It is no small coincidence that the articles included in this magazine are directly related to Lutheran General's renewed spirit. Whether it be the hospital's health-care team fighting a disease, a corporate reorganization or an outspoken member of our Medical Staff who points out that a segment of the American society is undermining our image of preventive health, Lutheran General is "Looking Well into the Future."

# PREVENTIVE MEDICINE:

## Counteradvertising Provides Healthy Competition

For Alan Blum, M.D., an ounce of prevention means having the courage, the wit and the money to attack an American institution he feels is contributing to the deterioration of our health.

The American institution is advertising, the image makers who innocuously convince us that a particular perfume or after-shave, shampoo or pair of jeans will make us more attractive. On a more detrimental level though, according to Dr. Blum, these same image makers convince us that smoking is glamorous and sexy, certain brands of liquor make us into the kind of person we want to be and that we can treat our colds and other miseries with over-the-counter drugs.

Dr. Blum, of the Lutheran General Hospital Division of Family Practice, is armed with the courage and wit and he heads an organization he helped create in 1977 to combat all advertising that he feels undermines an individual's image of good health. Doctors Ought to Care (DOC) now has more than 40 chapters throughout the U.S. And Dr. Blum spends much time traveling around the country to spread his beliefs to groups ranging from other health professionals to educators and junior high school students.

"Advertising is part of each person's day," he says. "No one will ever admit to buying a product because it was advertised, but it is a proven fact that the more a company advertises, the more sales it produces. We cannot overlook the obvious, because our complacency is being bought off by Madison Avenue."

Dr. Blum's number one target is the tobacco industry because of the link between cigarette smoking and



*DOC has produced this message on posters. Other revenue-producing activities include the sale of t-shirts.*

cancer and heart disease.

"If you can't take on number one, then you're not going to be successful taking on any of the other harmful types of advertising," he notes.

Dr. Blum's arsenal is a quick wit that directly makes fun of the ads by pointing out the absurdity of the wording. For example, a series of slides in his presentations will point out

messages such as "I smoke for taste" and 99 percent tar free."

"What do these messages mean?" Dr. Blum asks. "Advertisers are equating smoking with a lot of pretty scenes and good-looking people. It's a very influential type of pitch to youngsters, the ones who are making a choice of whether to start smoking or not."

In a recent article he wrote for a medical journal, Dr. Blum said, "To cite just one statistic, more than ten times as many 12-year-old girls are smoking cigarettes today than a decade ago." He continued by writing that the tobacco industry voluntarily removed its own television advertising due to the success of counteradvertising that flourished due to a fair-trade provision between 1968 and 1970.

Though cigarette ads are off the airways, their presence in a variety of consumer magazines aimed at youngsters and young adults who are forming buying habits has been influential.

"Some of the same models who sell clothes and cosmetics are also selling cigarettes," Dr. Blum points out. "And take a look at sports magazines that have the picture of a healthy-looking athlete on the front cover and a cigarette advertisement on the back cover. Kids are not being given a 'free choice' with this type of inducement. They are being told that this is the only way to grow up."

According to Dr. Blum, while advertising is to blame, publishers of newspapers and magazines compound the problem because they are opting for advertising revenue from products that undermine individuals' health but choose to reject some advertisements such as those for



X-rated movies or those making exaggerated political statements. He also is critical of publications that concentrate on the issue of laboratory cancer-causing agents such as saccharin instead of a product like cigarettes that is more integrated into the American life-style.

Dr. Blum also notes that cigarette advertising has had a long history of influence back to the days when cigarettes were advertised as a way to keep slim, promoting good digestion, and being smoked by athletes and physicians. "It's no wonder that smoking became the 'thing to do,'" Dr. Blum says. "So you see it's not

just the kids today that are being influenced, people 30 and 40 years ago also were being suckered."

If cigarette smoking is being made a looks and sex issue, Dr. Blum and DOC have been trying to counter by making fun of it. For example, DOC has purchased advertising space on bus benches throughout Dade County, Florida and other southern cities to present messages like, "Cigarettes: 10 Year Supply for \$7,000" and "Hospitals and Smoking Don't Mix." A local billboard displaying a beautiful mountain scene and a package of cigarettes reads "Country Fresh Arsenic."

In addition, DOC has combated the image of macho-looking male model stating, "I smoke for taste" in a magazine ad with a poster of an equally macho model with a cigarette stuck in one nostril and the slogan "I smoke for smell."

The humor of counteradvertising, Dr. Blum notes, is not only easy considering the imagery that serious ads try to convey, but it is appealing, especially to youths.

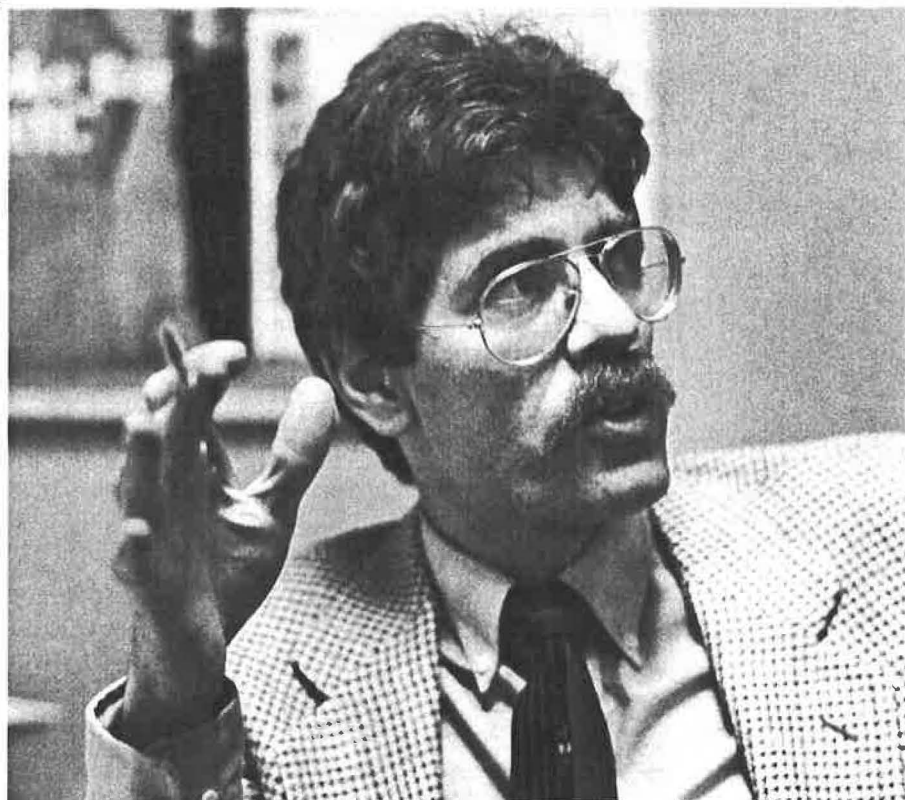
"Rather than establishing DOC chapters in large cities, we have started them in smaller communities," Dr. Blum says. "New York City or Chicago can learn a lot from small-town values."

The success of DOC, though, will rely on whether it can attract major financial backing. As a grass roots organization, it has received hundreds of small donations and Dr. Blum says a grant may be in the offing. Regardless, he says, it will be the courage and insight of health professionals and laypersons that will determine whether the American consumer can make reasonable life-style choices despite the power of advertising.

The responsibility of telling the public about the dangers of smoking should not be completely shouldered by physicians, according to Dr. Blum.

"All health professionals should be responsible for constantly pointing out how absurd this type of advertising is," he says. "The public has to be made aware that advertisers are not just telling you their products are

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Alan Blum, M.D., speaks out against harmful advertising. Anyone, especially local junior high and high school students, who want to start a Chicago area chapter of DOC, can contact him at 696-6000.

## The M.D. as Communicator

Alan Blum received his M.D. in 1975 from Emory University School of Medicine in Atlanta and earned a bachelor's degree in 1969 from Amherst College in Amherst, Mass.

Though medicine is his career, Dr. Blum has developed an extensive working knowledge of the media. In 1979-80, he served as a Morris Fishbein Fellow in Medical Journalism for the Journal of the American Medical Association and has hosted and appeared on a variety of radio and television health-related programs in Miami and Atlanta during and after his medical school days. Recently he has been a guest on WGN's Wally Phillips Show.

Researching, writing, producing

graphics and personally presenting health-related material for radio and television is only part of Dr. Blum's communication background. He has written a number of articles for medical journals and consumer health publications and his use of humor and knowledge of audiovisuals make him a popular speaker.

Dr. Blum's honors—other than his Fishbein Fellowship—include the Medical Journalism Award in 1975 from the Phi Delta Epsilon Medical Fraternity, second place in an AMA radio news competition for a five-part series on "A Look at Laetrile" in 1978 and first place in a radio talk-show AMA competition for "The Doctor Show" in 1979.

# PREVENTIVE MEDICINE:

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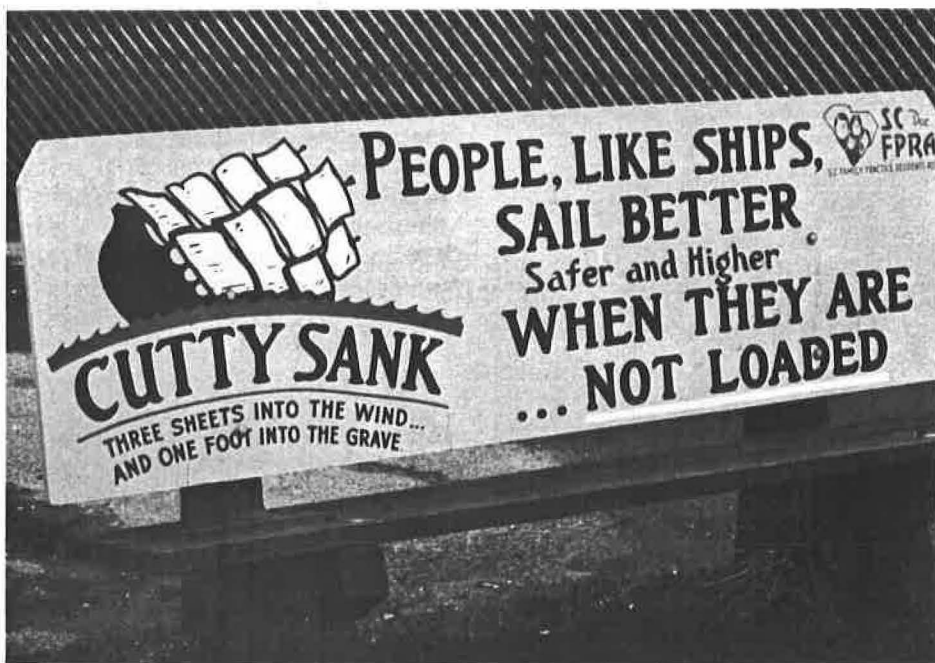
good, they're saying anything that will make you buy their products. People have to be aware of the obvious.

"We have for too long depended on research to come up with cures for diseases," Dr. Blum adds. "But our society is so research-minded that we forget that the best way to beat

diseases like cancer is through prevention. Advertising is the cornerstone of peer pressure and we all have to make some hard decisions to counter that. It's too late when someone finds out that they have cancer or heart disease. The time to start doing something about it is now."



Messages like this are designed to attract attention with biting sarcasm.



Cigarettes are not the only target of DOC's counteradvertising campaign in Dade County, Florida.

## Quotables

Cigarette smoking advertising is just one target of Dr. Blum's outspoken convictions.

On the subject of beer advertisements he says: "This is a classic example of advertising that attempts to build an image without substance. Beers are probably worse than they have ever been; they put more water in the product and call it a light beer."

"On the competitive cold-remedy and vitamin market, he says, "You do not need a single over-the-counter medication. The folks at Bristol-Meyers aren't concerned about preventing of your cold. They would rather that you continue to spend money treating cold symptoms. As far as vitamins are concerned, a balanced, varied diet will provide all the vitamins you need."

Concerning celebrities endorsing products, Dr. Blum explains that he doesn't mind seeing a notable individual sell a nonharmful product, but he wonders: "Wouldn't it be nice to see Mean Joe Greene saying, 'Cigarettes are a rip-off'." He adds that it's ironic for the public to accept actor Robert Young endorsing caffeine-free Sanka because of his "doctor's image" from the Marcus Welby, M.D. television series. The same person just 25 years earlier was endorsing cigarettes.

And on physicians and their role in preventive health and "deprogramming" the public from advertising, Dr. Blum says: "Doctors are the worst communicators of all, but we do know what we want to say. Physicians should be paid for the amount of knowledge they can contribute to preventive health rather than the number of procedures they order or perform. It all goes back to putting the emphasis on prevention rather than cure."