



November 1978

RESIDENT
PHYSICIANS SECTION

NEWS

► AMA Goes "Prevention"

When it comes to those who want to plan the future of our nation's health care system, could there be any stranger bedfellows than Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) and the AMA? Yet a recent conference in Washington, D.C., may have shown that even this odd couple is possible. The conference, entitled "Focus on Positive Health Strategies," was in fact jointly sponsored by the senator and the AMA. It drew several hundred health professionals from business, organized labor, and government. In a keynote address, Tom E. Nesbitt, M.D., AMA president, said that the main aim of the conference was to look at the areas where public and private resources could be concentrated to prevent the major causes of bad health.

After finding out that only 2% of the health care dollar is currently being spent on disease prevention, Senator Kennedy bluntly noted in his speech that there exists no national strategy for disease prevention.

Common among sponsors of the conference was the concern over the single most preventable cause of high health costs, cigarette smoking.

Did the conference accomplish anything? One observer stated "Just more talk, talk, talk." But Alan Blum, M.D., and Steve Dresnick, M.D., AMA-RPS Governing Council members who attended, both felt that at least it was a step in the right direction. It remains to be seen whether the conference's various sponsoring agencies will put their money where their mouth is by investing in programs for better health.

One group of physicians has already begun—the AMA-RPS is acting upon a resolution passed at the annual meeting encouraging the RPS to address national health issues. The governing council has appointed Dr. Blum to head up activities to develop resident leadership in preventive medicine programs.

Resident & Staff Physician

NOVEMBER 1978