

February 9, 1987

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MEMORANDUM

To: Peter Sparber  
From: Carol Hrycaj  
Re: DOC and Alan Blum

You have asked for a profile of Doctors Ought to Care (DOC): the issues with which it is involved, including those on which it may be vulnerable, conflicts with the AMA, and background on DOC's founder, Alan Blum. The information presented below was culled from news articles, wire stories, and other sources. For your reference, I have retained the articles that support this profile.

DOC is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1977 by Alan Blum. There is some contradiction in news articles concerning DOC's president; some sources identify Blum, while others list Dr. John William Richards. Tom Houston is cited as DOC's "Coordinator." Membership estimates range from 2,000 to 3,500; led by physicians, members include medical students, teachers, and others. Attached for your information is DOC's entry from the 1987 Encyclopedia of Associations.

This organization functions to educate the public on health issues; youth is targeted for involvement. It focuses on smoking, alcohol, drug abuse, teen pregnancy, and "healthy" life-styles. Press coverage indicates that smoking and cigarette advertising has been at the top of its agenda.

Listed below is a summary of DOC activities receiving press attention:

- Protests cigarette companies' sponsorship of athletic events, art exhibits; product placement in film.
- Involved in counter-advertising campaigns using the media, billboards, buses, comic strips; involves youth in this effort. Pressures publications to modify its policy on tobacco-related ads. Created anti-smoking radio ads using tape recorded excerpts of N.Y. Mayor Koch's statements on gay bath houses, stating "they are selling death." Co-sponsors awards for deceptive advertising.

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- Pressures alcohol industry to use drunk driving and health warning labels on alcoholic beverages; calls for an end to deceptive advertising practices.
- In 1981, opposed diet pill ingredient PPA.
- Sponsors essay contest in reaction to Philip Morris' announced competition.
- Drs. Lippman and Jaffe of DOC's Seattle chapter are arrested for defacing cigarette ads on billboards; they addressed The American Public Health meeting 10/86 sharing this and other terrorist tactics.
- Announces campaign to send constituents' death notices to Congressional members.
- With The American Council on Science and Health, criticizes the AMA for not taking up smoking issues earlier.

Alan Blum has been quoted saying that he is "out to end the sales of cigarettes." His father probably was the impetus for this goal. When Blum was a child, his father, a three-pack-a-day smoker, survived a massive coronary. During the 1950's, his father prompted him to tape record cigarette advertisements aired during baseball games; these were blasted as propaganda. This anecdote is from a 1986 Boston Globe profile of Blum that labels him as an obsessed, anti-smoking guerilla.

Two years after graduating from Emory University School of Medicine, Blum fared miserably in an April 1977 debate against TI's Bill Dwyer -- "He made me lose my cool. He made me look like a fool." Prompted by this defeat, he founded DOC to counter the tobacco industry and to raise money for anti-cigarette advertising.

Blum's involvement with the AMA began in the late 1970s working in the association's Resident Physicians Section. After election to the section's governing council, he pushed for the group to divest its tobacco holdings.

In January 1983, he was named editor of the N.Y. State Journal of Medicine. By December of that year he met his objective of publishing an issue devoted to smoking. A follow-up issue was published in July 1985. He was working on his third when he was fired from his post in January 1986.

In addition to his staunch position on smoking, Blum has spoken out against boxing and automobile and motorcycle racing, calling for a broadcast ban on these "pseudosports." In fall 1983, Blum filed a protest with The National News Council

concerning a "Frontline" episode that raised the question of murder in the death of LA Rams owner Carroll Rosenbloom. He complained that by ignoring the coroner's report of accidental death, the coverage was "tantamount to practicing medicine without a license."

Blum has been critical of the AMA's posture on smoking issues. In January 1986, he was supported by Elizabeth Whelan, director of The American Council on Science and Health, in levying charges that the AMA has not dealt aggressively enough on smoking-related issues.