

Physician's policy has some puffers huffy

By Pam Hoffman
Staff Writer

John Cannell has been getting more than just a few angry calls of late from smokers who are very content with their addiction, thank you, and anxious to let Cannell know.

Call the physician's Beaver clinic and ask to speak with the doctor and the receptionist will ask why you want to talk to him.

Tell her you want to talk about Cannell's new smoking policy and she'll ask what about it.

Add a bit of ice to your voice and

a touch of impatience. Tell her you want to learn more about his new policy and the receptionist will at last see if the doctor can talk.

Yes, says Cannell, the angry calls have been pouring in. Well, what can a doctor in Southern West Virginia expect when he advertises that he will accept no more patients who smoke?

"If a physician's emphasis is on health, it is illogical for me to pretend the addiction to a drug as dangerous as tobacco is compatible with health," Cannell says. "Tobacco addiction is easily the most

dangerous drug in the U.S. today."

Tobacco kills more people every day than cocaine does in a year, he says. More Americans will die from cigarette addiction this year, he adds, than the number of Americans killed in World War II.

"More vegetables are created every hour from cigarettes than in a year from illegal drugs."

To Cannell, it is the height of hypocrisy for the man with a pack of Camels in his shirt pocket to criticize the man addicted to cocaine. A man has every right to smoke, says the doctor, but he should be lumped

in the same category with all the other drug addicts.

So, a couple of weeks ago, Cannell began running newspaper ads informing readers that he would accept no new patients who smoke. He says he won't refuse care to someone who is sick. He simply doesn't want to take on any new long-term patients who smoke.

"I think it delivers a message to people," says Cannell. "The message is you can't be healthy when you smoke. That is a message physicians do not give enough."

Not all the callers have been an-

gry though. Several smokers, he says, have come to him for help after the ads appeared and are now enrolled in a program to quit smoking.

Cannell says he saw a young woman Tuesday recently diagnosed with lung cancer. It has become the leading cancer killer of women because their smoking habits have begun to match those of men.

"There's enough death and suffering in the world," he says. "I don't like to see self-induced death and suffering."



John Cannell