

- To provide educational and research opportunities for journalists
- To develop a graduate-level curriculum for health professionals to impart knowledge and skills for working with the media
- To conduct research and demonstrations to test new models for applying mass communication techniques to public health campaigns.

Winsten says these missions integrate the academic interests of teaching and research with the practical world of mass communication.

The staff works with leading experts from institutions around the nation to review controversies, sort through evidence on all sides of an issue, and interpret the meaning of new scientific developments. A nutrition and fitness service has been established at the center as a resource for journalists. Writers can call the center and ask for information or for referrals to leading experts as well as for guidance in planning articles.

"When a writer wants to get a perspective on an issue, it takes a lot of networking. We don't just provide a quick source of information to journalists. We aim to provide perspective on issues by providing a balanced view.

"The unique feature of the center is that we aim for neutrality—and we can do that because we don't have a vested interest to push," says Hewes. "Our interest is in providing dependable health information to journalists to advance the cause of public health."

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A sixth-grader's winning ad comments on another billboard.

Doctors Fight the Effects of Tobacco Ads on the Young

NEW YORK—Advertising is one of the many ways in which the media influence health-related behavior. The influence of advertising can be positive, but it also can be pernicious: perhaps the clearest example is in the case of tobacco advertising. Cigarettes are the most heavily advertised product in America, with advertising and promotional budgets totaling \$2.1 billion a year, according to the Federal Trade Commission.

Tobacco advertising and its influence on smoking behavior have become a hotly debated issue. Health professionals argue that advertising is designed to lure new smokers into the fold and get former smokers to light up again. Advertisers and representatives of the tobacco industry say they promote their products only to keep smokers loyal to their brand and to get other smokers to switch.

Health professionals concerned about the influence of tobacco advertising try to counter its

effects through various strategies. One group called Doctors Ought to Care (DOC) uses parodies of cigarette ads and offers a curriculum that teaches young people to look at advertising with a critical eye. DOC and many other groups call for an outright ban on tobacco products.

Mention of such a ban draws cries of censorship from the tobacco industry, the media, the advertising industry, and the American Civil Liberties Union.

Nonetheless, a bill is now before Congress to outlaw all promotion of tobacco products, including advertising, sponsorship of cultural and sporting events, and the distribution of free samples of cigarettes. Supporters of the ban include the American Lung Association, the American Heart Association, the American Cancer Society, and the American Medical Association.

Some legal scholars argue that a ban would be unconstitutional and threaten free speech. Because tobacco is a legal product,

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it is manufactured and sold legally. Advertising is considered "commercial free speech"—a category protected by the First Amendment, though not as extensively as political or religious speech.

William G. Miller, a White Plains, New York, lawyer who favors banning tobacco ads says, "Tobacco is uniquely perilous. If it is taken as intended, it harms the consumer. Cigarette advertising is deceptive, and unfortunately, most of it is aimed at the young. The imagery in advertising is alluring, but it doesn't provide any information about price and ingredients. It portrays happiness and health, but doesn't say that the end result is disability and disease."

Miller says that 60 percent of all smokers are addicted before they are 15 years old, and 90 percent are hooked by the time they reach 20. "Free speech is desirable, for sure, but so is protection of the young," he adds.

Even the federal government is dependent on tobacco, collecting millions of dollars annually in excise taxes on cigarette sales.

Fighting all the deeply entrenched tobacco interests is a formidable task, but since 1977 DOC, a group of young physicians, has taken up the challenge with a national anti-tobacco advertising campaign. DOC uses the same tactics that Madison Avenue employs to sell products for tobacco manufacturers—but instead produces spoofs of the tobacco ads.

Alan Blum, the founder of DOC, says the organization's work is aimed primarily at young people. "We want them to be able to turn the tables on Madison Avenue's promotion of unhealthy living so that they can as-

sume responsibility for their own lives by making the best health choices," says Blum.

DOC's advertising budget of \$10,000 to \$20,000 a year for billboards, posters, bus cards, broadcast public service announcements, and bumper stickers is minuscule compared to the giant



One of the cigarette ad parodies created by DOC.

tobacco advertisers'. The organization is supported by contributions from its 3,500 members, who are physicians, medical students, and health professionals.

"We use sexy models and humor to get our message across. Our model totes a tennis racket and touts Emphysema Slims instead of Virginia Slims. We use advertising's methods to undermine its own message," says Rick Richards, president of DOC.

"If we can make her look like so much makeup and nothing more, the teenager who sees it will laugh at it," says Richards. "When we can effectively spoof the image, we effectively destroy the cigarette advertising cam-

paign."

Philip Morris, Inc., which manufactures Marlboro and other brands, sponsored an essay contest offering a \$15,000 top prize, in which it asked contestants to write about how an advertising ban on tobacco products would affect "the future of free expression in a free market economy." DOC has responded with its own contest, asking entrants to write on the question "Are Tobacco Company Executives Criminally Responsible for the Deaths, Disease, and Fires Their Products Cause?" The winner will receive a prize of \$1,000.

In some states, DOC has gained approval from education departments to present its own antismoking curriculum to sixth-graders.

Mark Glassner, chairman of DOC's Education Committee, worked with a small group of DOC members to create the curriculum for Delaware, his own state. The curriculum consists of five basic sessions, with suggestions for additional activities that the teacher can initiate. This curriculum now is used by the national DOC organization when it receives requests for antismoking materials for schoolchildren.

In the first session, the students are asked to interview a smoker. The youngsters receive a list of questions to ask the adult smoker. "The idea is to get the students to find out what smoking is like without actually being hurt by smoking," says Glassner.

The second session allows the children to discuss the results of their interviews and learn about the power of addiction.

For session three, the students build a smoking machine from household materials and

learn about the tar, carbon monoxide, and other noxious substances in tobacco smoke.

Students view the film *Death in the West* in the fourth session. In the film (produced in England by Thames Television), commercials showing the "Marlboro Man" enjoying his cigarette are presented along with the stories of real-life cowboys who are dying of lung cancer, heart disease, and emphysema. After the viewers hear the smokers' stories, they hear statements from tobacco company executives in defense of smoking.

A slide show is presented to the sixth-graders in the final session. The DOC representative who gives the show explains the tactics used by the advertising industry to promote smoking, helping children gain a critical understanding of the ads that bombard them 24 hours a day.

"Kids can name more brands of cigarettes than they can name presidents of the United States," says Glassner. "It's difficult to sell health to someone who already has it. All we can do is show these children the images used by advertising and how they're being brainwashed by them. Money and looking good are important to young adolescents—and those areas are where we try to appeal to the kids. We point out that one pack a day costs \$400 a year and how that can buy a lot of records, tapes, and clothes."

The Delaware DOC organization follows up on the curriculum with a poster contest for students. The subject matter is cigarette advertising and the images that tobacco manufacturers use in selling their products. Four winners are picked from each school. From this pool of contestants, one state winner is chosen and his or her poster is enlarged and displayed on billboards throughout

the state.

DOC's founder says the organization is image-based, not information-based: "We emphasize getting into the streets and doing things to get people's attention. We've put on demonstrations outside art exhibits" sponsored by tobacco companies, says Blum.

DOC also launched a campaign in which it sent black-bordered death notices to congressmen alerting them that one of their constituents had died of a tobacco-related illness.

While groups like DOC work to accelerate the antismoking movement, the Tobacco Institute, the trade association for cigarette manufacturers, is in the business of lobbying and press relations for the tobacco companies. Walker Merryman, vice president of the institute, says that proponents of the tobacco ad ban don't realize that "if the ads go, the surgeon general's warnings in those ads go also. These ads make one billion impressions annually."

As far as the health controversy over smoking goes, Merryman says: "It's our long-standing position that the American public is fully informed about what the surgeon general says in regard to smoking. Adults have the right to make their own decision about whether to smoke or not.

"The industry does not want youngsters smoking cigarettes," says Merryman. "Youngsters should consult with their parents, trust adult advice, and defer many decisions—like smoking—until they become adults."

Blum scoffs at these claims by what he calls "the PR arm of the tobacco industry." To him, anyone who promotes tobacco is a drug pusher. "Advertising and tobacco company executives should be put in jail for promot-

ing these products. The person who buys cigarettes and smokes them has no idea what's in the cigarettes he buys. It's difficult to compete with advertising. There won't be any progress until people begin to acknowledge just how pervasive ads are and how much influence advertising has over them."

Just because tobacco is legal doesn't mean publishers have to accept advertising, says Blum. "Publishers are not passive recipients of tobacco ads—they go out and actively solicit them."

A small number of newspapers reject tobacco ads. Among them are *The Christian Science Monitor*, the *Daily Record* of Morristown, New Jersey; *The Deseret News*, Salt Lake City, Utah; the *News-Banner*, Bluffton, Indiana; and *The Salina Journal*, Salina, Kansas.

Blum has established a DOC tobacco archive, which he says will counteract the work of the Tobacco Institute. "It offers a different perspective in terms of the history and scientific thought surrounding tobacco," Blum says. "It will serve as a resource for researchers in any field touching on tobacco and its promotion."

—Constance Grzelka

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