



National Museum of
Health and Medicine

The museum is an element of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology
on the campus of Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington D.C.

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**“WHEN MORE DOCTORS SMOKED CAMELS:
A CENTURY OF HEALTH CLAIMS IN CIGARETTE ADVERTISING”**

WASHINGTON – The National Museum of Health and Medicine will host “When More Doctors Smoked Camels: A Century of Health Claims in Cigarette Advertising,” a free illustrated lecture and gallery talk presented by Alan Blum, M.D., on Saturday, Feb. 17 at 1 p.m., highlighting the exhibit “Cartoonists Take Up Smoking,” on display through April 1, 2007.

Week in and week out from the 1920s through the 1950s, tobacco companies used images of physicians and their implied endorsements to help sell cigarettes. Such advertisements appeared not only in most issues of Life, Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News and World Report, but also in the Journal of the American Medical Association and the New England Journal of Medicine.

“Through the years, cigarette advertising depicted doctors almost as often as movie stars and sports heroes,” said Blum, curator of the exhibit, and whose lecture will feature many such ads and vintage television commercials.

Although cigarette advertisements were banned from TV in 1971, their print counterparts did not completely disappear from medical journals until the 1980s.

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Blum also cites recent ads, such as the one in Time and People Magazine in 2001 for a brand by Liggett called Omni, which claimed to have “less carcinogens.”

“Such hokum isn’t much different than the same company’s advertisements that proclaimed ‘Stay safe, smoke Chesterfield’ and ‘L & M, just what the doctor ordered’ in the 1950s,” he said.

He describes the creation of the filter, low-tar brands and “light” cigarettes as marketing ploys to allay public anxiety about smoking.

“Cartoonists Take Up Smoking,” is an exhibition of original newspaper editorial cartoons retracing the 40-year battle over the use and promotion of cigarettes since the publication of the landmark Surgeon General's report on smoking and health in 1964. It also addresses complacency on the part of organized medicine, politicians, and the mass media in ending the tobacco pandemic.

The exhibit features 55 original cartoons by more than 50 nationally known American editorial cartoonists and is supplemented by smoking-related items, from the original newspaper headlines that inspired the cartoons to advertisements promoting the health benefits of lighting up.

In addition to the cartoons, several mini-exhibitions are on view, including the airline flight attendants’ battle to get Congress to pass the ban on smoking on commercial aircraft; a history of the Kent Micronite Filter, made from asbestos; the advertising of cigarettes in medical journals from the 1920s to the 1980s; and the selection of cigarette commercials and smoking scenes from TV and the movies.

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Two preserved lungs from the museum’s anatomical collection—one showing the ill effects of smoking and the other a healthy lung—highlight the exhibit.

“Cartoonists Take Up Smoking” is curated from the collections of the University of Alabama Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society that Blum founded and directs. It holds one of the largest sociocultural archives on tobacco, including more than 300 original editorial cartoon artworks on smoking-related themes.

“The wide ranging controversies surrounding tobacco are captured in the cartoons, from the misguided quest for a safe cigarette to the targeting of tobacco advertising to women and minority groups,” Blum said. “Cartoons on smoking have had an impact at both local and national levels. Editorial cartoons practically laughed Joe Camel out of town and helped pass countless clean indoor air laws.”

The exhibit will be on display at the museum, which is open every day except Dec. 25 from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. The museum is located at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, 6900 Georgia Avenue and Elder Street, NW, Washington, D.C. For more information call (202) 782-2200 or visit www.nmhm.washingtondc.museum. Admission and parking are free.

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