

# 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, DC



## SMOKING



The National Museum of Health and Medicine recently opened "Cartoonists Take Up Smoking," an exhibition of original newspaper editorial cartoons on a single theme, presented by Alan Blum, M.D., one of the nation's foremost authorities on the

history of the tobacco industry and the battle over smoking.

The exhibit retraces 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. The exhibit also addresses complacency on the part of organized medicine, politicians, and the mass media in ending the tobacco pandemic.



The exhibit is curated from material at the University of Alabama Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society, which 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 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. Also displayed are several artifacts, as well as two preserved lungs -- one showing the ill effects of smoking and the other a healthy lung -- from the museum's anatomical collection.



Blum, a graduate of Emory University School of Medicine in Atlanta, was awarded the Surgeon General's Medallion in 1988 by Dr. C. Everett Koop. He has been invited to speak on tobacco-related issues by medical and public health organizations in all 50 states and at numerous international conferences. As the former editor of the Medical Journal of Australia and the N.Y. State Journal of Medicine, he also published the first-ever theme issues on smoking by any medical journal in the world, in 1983 and 1985 respectively.



"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 the local and national levels. Editorial cartoons practically laughed Joe Camel out of town and helped pass countless clean indoor air laws."

In their artist's statement, several of the cartoonists relate that their family members have suffered from smoking-related illnesses. For example, David Fitzsimmons of The Arizona Star, said "My mother and father died within a month of each other because of their inability to overcome their addiction to cigarettes. I understand, firsthand, the impact of tobacco on the lives of people."

For half a century, the cartoonist most unapologetically opposed to smoking and the tobacco industry was The Washington Post's Herblock (Herb Block ), several of whose cartoons are reproduced in the show.

Not all cartoonists have depicted tobacco as an evil weed. Indeed, several could be described as anti-anti-smoking, in part based on their belief in the freedom to choose. Clay Bennett of the Christian Science Monitor wonders if there also should be laws against nagging and finger-wagging. The New York Post's Sean Delonas foresees the advent of a smoke police force roaming sidewalks and parks.

The exhibition debuted at the Ann Tower Gallery in Lexington, Ky. in conjunction with the annual convention of the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists. It also was displayed in Seattle, Tuscaloosa, and Birmingham, Ala. Its display in Washington, D.C. is the conclusion of its traveling schedule.

"We are happy to be hosting 'Cartoonists Take Up Smoking,' said Adrienne Noe, Ph.D., the museum's director. "The assembled cartoonists' work rival any scalpel we have on display for their sharpness. They span the humorous to the deadly serious and will allow visitors to relive a public medical and political debate about a health issue that continues to grasp us all. It's particularly fitting to host this wonderful collection at the nation's medical museum, where it will be seen amid other exhibits that inspire learning about medicine and health, including the real lungs of a person who smoked."

The exhibit, which was produced with the cooperation of the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists, will be on display at the museum during the week of the World Conference on Tobacco or Health, July 10-15, at the Washington Convention Center in Washington, D.C.

Lori Jacobi, M.A., archivist at the University of Alabama Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society, provided additional support with the design, organization, and coordination of the exhibition. Eric Solberg, M.S., of Houston, Texas, past director of Doctors Ought to Care, served as Blum's principal adviser since the exhibition's inception a decade ago.

The exhibit installation was designed by museum exhibits manager, Steve Hill, with assistance from anatomical collection curator Lenore Barbian, Ph.D., exhibits specialist, Bill Discher, registrar Michelle Fontenot, collections manager Elizabeth Lockett, public affairs specialist Courtney MacGregor, and public affairs officer Steven Solomon.

The Herblock Foundation gave a special unrestricted gift to the Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society, which is helping to cover various expenses and to produce a facsimile exhibition for display in other cities.

The exhibit is running through September 2006. It 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 Ave. and Elder Street, NW, Washington, D.C. For more information call (202) 782 2200 or visit [www.nmhm.washingtondc.museum](http://www.nmhm.washingtondc.museum). Admission and parking are free.