



FEBRUARY 7, 1986

American Medical

NEWS

In New York

Dr. Blum asked to leave journal post

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Named as the new editor and director of the division of scientific publications by the medical society was Pascal James Imperato, MD, a former New York City health commissioner. Dr. Imperato has worked for the *New York Journal* since 1983 as a consulting editor and deputy editor. He also is a professor and chairman of the Dept. of Preventive Medicine and Community Health at New York's Downstate Medical Center.

Medical society officials called Dr.

Blum's dismissal "a management decision, entirely within the province of the executive vice president." George Lawrence, MD, the society's outgoing executive vice president, declined to discuss details of Dr. Blum's dismissal, saying only that "the decision had nothing to do with the editorial content of the *Journal*."

Dr. Blum's firing was announced formally after a closed executive committee meeting Jan. 23.

Dr. Blum, a former Fishbein Fellow for the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* who had served as the editor of the *Medical Journal of Australia* for a year before taking the position in New York, is widely known for his anti-smoking activism. He and several other

physicians started "Doctors Ought to Care" (DOC), a physician lobbying group that sought to counteract advertising of unhealthy lifestyles.

Medical society officials maintained that Dr. Blum's active anti-smoking stance and activities had "nothing whatsoever" to do with his dismissal. A society spokesman called members and officers "very supportive" of the *Journal's* anti-smoking position. The society recently banned smoking at its meetings.

Dr. Blum told *AMN* that the dismissal "was confirmed to me as a matter of editorial policy and direction. I was told more of a house organ rather than a scientific journal was what the society needed."



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Dr. Blum told AMN that the dismissal "was confirmed to me as a matter of editorial policy and direction."

"I was told more of a house organ rather than a scientific journal was what the society needed," Dr. Blum added.



ASH, Others Protest Firing of Famous Editor After His Criticism of AMA

Dr. Alan Blum, who achieved world-wide fame as an outspoken critic of smoking and those who fail to take forceful action against it, was fired from his position as editor of the *New York State Journal of Medicine* immediately after he was quoted in a national article questioning the AMA's claim to leadership in the war on smoking.

ASH and many other antismoking activists have protested, and ASH has sent a special mailing to anti-smoking organizations asking them to join in the protest.

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Dr. Blum believes it may have been this remark, plus his leadership in devoting two—with plans to make it three—issues of the journal exclusively to the nation's number one preventable health problem, that triggered his firing after a secret meeting without any due process and with minimal severance. He was replaced by someone he had hired as his assistant.

On December 23, 1985, an Associated Press article about the AMA's decision to seek a ban on all tobacco advertising was flashed over the AMA's wire service. It included Dr. Blum's comment that "for much of the last seventeen years they have politely patted people on the head who were trying to raise the issue [of smoking]. To assert now that they are leaders is a bitter irony that sticks in my craw."

The very next working day, December 26th, a secret meeting was held and subsequently Dr. Blum received a most unwelcome Christmas surprise: He had been fired from a position he had held for three years, just after receiving a substantial salary increase that finally permitted him to purchase a house, while he and his wife awaited the arrival of their third child.

Officials of the Medical Society of the State of New York deny that the decision to fire Blum was based on his outspoken views concerning smoking, or was taken because he was then planning a third hard-hitting issue devoted to smoking. It was solely a management decision, and had "nothing whatsoever" to do with "his active antismoking stance and activities." But Blum contends that

he "was done in by the smoke-filled room," and that he "can't think of a nicer gift for the tobacco industry."

The Society claims that it was very supportive of Dr. Blum's antismoking stance, citing their own recent decision to ban smoking at their own meetings. But Blum says that he was told by a Society official that one *Journal* issue devoted to smoking was "all right," that the second broke "no new ground," and that a third "may not be appropriate for a state medical journal."

Coincidentally with his firing, the status of the Editor of the *Journal* was downgraded from a full-time position to a half-time position. Blum says that the Society's outgoing Executive Vice President, Dr. George Lawrence, Jr., made it clear to him that they were more interested in having a house organ than a scientific journal devoted to major health and social issues such as smoking.

Many people have already written to the New York State Medical Society to protest Dr. Blum's firing. Here is what U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop said:

Alan Blum has made the *New York State Journal*, through its two special issues on smoking, a journal of national and international significance. I probably am as deeply involved in the smoking issue here and abroad as anyone, and I can attest to the fact that whether in foreign ministries of health, or talking with private sector activists, Alan Blum has put the *New York State Journal* on the map and has given it credibility far above most such journals.

I feel that it is my business to call your attention to the great loss on the

(Continued on next page)

Blum

(continued from page 1)

national and international scene that Alan Blum's departure would be. The eyes of the whole public health world are on your journal. I hope that if the information I have is correct, you will do whatever is possible to see that he is retained to continue the work he has begun in your State but which echoes throughout the world.

ASH believes that the *New York State Journal of Medicine*, like other medical publications, should devote more—not less—space to the most important single medical problem of our time; that the timing and manner of Dr. Blum's firing make it very difficult to believe that it was only a routine management decision totally unrelated to his comments that had aired only days before; and that, in any event, he was treated most unfairly in being given only one month's severance pay after serving for three years.

For these reasons, ASH urges its supporters, particularly those who live in New York State, to write to the Society to express their views, and to ask physicians whom they know to do likewise. The address is Medical Society of New York, 420 Lakeville Rd., Lake Success, NY 11042.

News You Should Know

Switching to pipes or cigars doesn't necessarily lessen the health hazards of smoking, according to a new study by the School of Public Health at the University of Minnesota published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. The reason is that cigarette smokers who switch often smoke more or inhale more deeply than those who never smoked cigarettes, thereby cancelling out at least some of the benefits of switching.

The Maryland House of Delegates, unanimously and with no debate, passed a bill to **ban the sale of clove cigarettes**, which reportedly have

ASH Contributions Fully Tax-Deductible for Everybody

Contributions made to ASH during the year 1986-NOW will be 100 percent tax-deductible for everyone, even for people who do NOT itemize. This means that for people who do not itemize, as well as for those who do, the out-of-pocket cost of your contribution is substantially less than the money you give ASH. Put another way, the U.S. government will now match a portion of your contribution to ASH even if you don't itemize. Giving has never been easier or less expensive.

Consider this simple example. Suppose you send ASH a check for \$100. ASH receives the full \$100, which it then spends on legal action to protect your rights. But early next year when you file your 1986 tax return, you can deduct the full amount as a charitable deduction. If you are in the 40 percent tax bracket, this deduction will save you \$40 in taxes! In effect your \$100 contribution to ASH cost you only \$60; the other \$40 ASH received came from the federal government.

Until recently, people who did not itemize deductions on their federal income tax return could not get any tax advantages. For 1984 they could deduct only 25 percent of the first \$300 in contributions. For 1985 they could deduct 50 percent of their contributions. Now, for 1986, 100 percent of contributions to organizations like ASH (exempt under Section 501 [c] [3]) are 100 percent deductible.

As in past years, contributions of appreciated assets—stocks, bonds, or other items that have increased in value—result in additional tax advantages, since the donor receives credit for the full present value of the contribution, and escapes any capital gains tax on the increase in value. Consider this simple example.

An ASH supporter who purchased stock for \$500 now finds that it has risen in value to \$1000. If he sells the stock and gives the \$1000 to ASH, he gets a charitable deduction for \$1000 but still has to pay the capital gains tax on the \$500 increase in the value of the stock. However, if he or she gives the stock directly to ASH, ASH still receives \$1000, the donor gets a charitable deduction for \$1000, but escapes having to pay any capital gains tax. With stock prices rising, you may find this the most cost effective way to help ASH and save money at the same time.

Let ASH's attorneys show you other tax advantages you might obtain by helping ASH: through bargain sales, estate planning devices, and other means. Donors should note, however, that there are different forms of tax-exempt organizations, and that for some, contributions are not tax deductible and other tax advantages do not apply. To avoid any confusion or potential problems, check directly with the organization. A document attesting to ASH's tax-exempt status is available upon request. Please call or write for additional information.

been implicated in at least 12 cases of severe illness and other deaths between March 1984 and May 1985. But the Specialty Tobacco Council, Inc., which represents those who make, import, and sell the cigarettes, is up in arms, claiming that the legislation is unconstitutional and smacks of prohibition.

Singer Connie Francis was arrested at an Atlanta airport for refusing to

stop smoking while her plane was refueling.

"Tobacco Litigation" is the title of a seminar to be presented by the *National Law Journal* in New York City on May 8-9. For information call (212) 741-8300.

Linjeflyg, the major Swedish domestic airline, has **banned all smoking on its flights** as of January 20th.