

# Newsday

January 23, 1984



## *Fired up about smoking*

By B.D. Colen

You're probably already surmised from the headline that this is yet another column on the problem of cigarette smoking. You may even think it's a drag to repeatedly read about the medical and social consequences of smoking.

But before you pass over this Take Care and move on to Ann Landers, read the following:

"Every year cigarettes kill more Americans than were killed in World War I, the Korean War and Vietnam (through late 1967) combined; nearly as many as died in battle in World War II. Each year cigarettes kill five times more Americans than do traffic accidents. Lung cancer alone kills as many as die on the road. The cigarette industry is peddling a deadly weapon. It is dealing in people's lives for financial gain."

The late Robert F. Kennedy's words were upsetting enough when he uttered them 16 years ago at the First World Conference on Smoking and Health, held in New York City. But it is appalling that the statement is as accurate today as it was then, and yet there is no major public outcry about the situation.

It is, in fact, 20 years since the issuance of the first Surgeon General's Report on Smoking and Health, which warned the public of the incontrovertible evidence linking smoking and serious illness. As Dr. Luther L. Terry, the U.S. surgeon general who issued the first report, writes in the December issue of the New York State Journal of Medicine, "many Americans believe that the Surgeon General's Advisory Committee report, Smoking and Health, of 1964, was America's first recognition of the enormous toll taken by tobacco. But in fact, it was the culmination of

growing scientific concern over a period of more than 25 years . . ."

As Terry points out, as early as 1928 the New England Journal of Medicine carried an epidemiological study of cancer patients in which the authors reported that cigarette smoking was more common among the cancer patients than among the controls. And still you smoke.

The December issue of the New York State Journal of Medicine should be required reading for every smoker in America and, for that matter, for every elementary school student who can read well enough to understand the brilliant collection of essays which make up the issue entitled "The World Cigarette Pandemic." Copies can be ordered by sending \$5 to the Circulation Department, New York State Journal of Medicine, 420 Lakeville Rd., P.O. Box 5404, Lake Success, N.Y. There are cheaper rates for bulk orders.

In addition to Terry, four former surgeons general — Drs. L. E. Burney, William H. Stewart, Jesse L. Steinfeld, and Julius B. Richmond — contributed to the issue, as did Dr. C. Everett Koop, the current surgeon general. The issue also includes articles on the fiction of "less hazardous" cigarettes, the advertising and promotion tactics of the tobacco industry, the hazards of smoking during pregnancy, the economics of smoking, the part cigarettes play in fire deaths and various governmental attempts to regulate smoking.

The articles in the journal are well worth reading and are a far cry from the usual obscure offerings of state and national medical journals. No one can come away from a reading of even a small proportion of these offerings without realizing that something has to be done about this, the nation's No. 1 health problem. After all, something is very wrong indeed when the government spends less on educating the public to the dangers of cigarette smoking than the tobacco industry spends on pushing its addictive wares.

Will it be necessary 20 years from now for a state medical society to devote an issue of its journal to the "World Smoking Pandemic"? Will there still be full-page advertisements for cigarettes in major national publications? And will we still be arguing about "smokers' rights" and "nonsmokers' rights"? ■

# Editorials and Comments

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## War Against The Weed

Cigarette addiction continues its massive erosional effects on the health of multitudes many decades after proof of its poisonous effects.

The forecast for the outcome of this battle is far from certain.

For the first time, a medical journal, our own New

York State Journal of Medicine (December 1983) has devoted an entire issue to this terrifying problem which the editors identify so accurately as "The World Cigarette Pandemic."

The editors of the Journal and MSSNY deserve great credit for a fine contribution to human health. □

## Above All, Do No Harm

"Above all, do no harm." One would think that this dictum from our own Hippocratic Oath would be self-evident, and that no physician would need to be reminded of it. But, like the Golden Rule and other self-evident doctrines, it bears periodic reiteration and re-enforcement.

In Michigan, physicians in the employ of the State Government have been asked to administer Depo-Provera to convicted rapists in order to decrease their sex drives—in short, chemical castration. In New Jersey, physicians will be expected to participate in the administration of lethal injections to criminals who have received the death sentence—in short, to kill.

The participation of physicians in punitive acts, whether or not those acts are authorized or sanctioned by the government, is contrary to all that we stand for.

On a philosophical level, it makes us into injurers rather than healers.

On a practical level, it represents the abdication of responsibility on our part—allowing us to be directed by, and ultimately controlled by, the government.

We have the integrity, the morality, and the wisdom to withstand government. Let us hold to our principles. Above all, do no harm. □

# President's message

Robert Higgins, M.D.



## Prevention is the only acceptable way to cut costs

The high cost of health care—now at about 11 1/2 percent of our Gross National Product—is one of the most publicized problems facing medicine today.

If we truly want to reduce health costs, then we'll have to invent some imaginative approaches. The federal government, of course, has taken aim at physician reimbursement—an approach I believe is doomed to failure since physician fees are only a small part of the total cost of health care. It's like a midge trying to reverse a landslide: the effort has at best a negligible impact on the rate of increase.

The stark truth is that we have only a few methods at our disposal for reducing those costs. One, of course, is rationing—a Draconian move I doubt any of us has the stomach to implement.

Another, far more palatable approach is to reduce the incidence of costly illnesses that are, by and large, preventable. These primarily are "lifestyle" diseases brought about by the use of

## McNeil Awards deadline coming

Applications for the McNeil Awards for Clinical Research by Family Practice Residents are due at Academy headquarters by Nov. 15.

The awards were established two years ago with funding from the McNeil Consumer Products Company.

For applications and additional information, residents should contact: Claudene Clinton, AAFP Committee on Research, 1740 W. 92nd St., Kansas City, Mo. 64114. □

tobacco and the use and abuse of alcohol.

## 'Lifestyle' diseases extract heavy toll

How much grief do they cause? Just look at these sobering statistics:

- Some 44 percent of U.S. hospital admissions today are for tobacco- and alcohol-related illnesses.

- Nearly 70 people a day die on our highways from alcohol-related auto accidents—not to mention the injured who require expensive hospital care.

- About 1,000 people a day die from tobacco-related illnesses. As Academy member Alan Blum, editor of the *New York State Journal of Medicine*, has noted, *that's the equivalent of three 747s crashing every day!* I doubt the public would tolerate that if the cause were as obvious as a plane crash.

## The FP's pivotal role

As family physicians, we have an obligation and a responsibility to work in partnership with our patients, to inspire them to adopt healthier, more cost-effective lifestyles.

We need to encourage them to stop smoking, to drink alcohol in moderation or not at all, to banish sedentary lifestyles by exercising, to develop sound nutritional practices, and to avoid illicit drugs and other harmful activities.

All of us have good intentions, but sometimes it's hard to make prevention a priority item in our busy practices. With this in mind, I'd like to offer a couple of suggestions that can help you over this "priority hump."

## Family Health Month perfect for prevention

First, I'd like to invite you to join your Academy colleagues in observing the AAFP's Family Health Month this October. The annual event has grown bigger

and more nationally prominent each year.

Take a look at the story on page 1 that chronicles the exciting details of this year's observance. Then call the AAFP's toll-free phone number—(800) 821-2512—and order a free Family Health Month kit to help you celebrate family health in your own community.

One of this year's new offerings for Family Health Month promises to be fun and colorful as well as educational. On page 3 of this *Reporter* you'll find a "fitness coloring page" that features Hallmark Properties' Rainbow Brite™, for you to copy and distribute to your pediatric patients. The Family Health Month story on page 1 tells you more about the coloring page project.

The coloring page is the AAFP's first cooperative venture with Hallmark Properties and the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports—and I assure you it won't be the last. We're pleased to be working with such fine organizations to promote fitness among children.

## If you want to target smoking

Second, I'd like to draw two other resources to your attention, specifically for your anti-smoking efforts. They are the July 1985 issue of the *New York State Journal of Medicine* and a recently published book called "The Cigarette Underworld," both edited by AAFP member Alan Blum.

The journal issue deals exclusively with smoking and health. It's a follow-up to the journal's December 1983 issue on the same subject—which now is available in book form as "The Cigarette Underworld."

Copies of the July 1985 journal issue can be obtained at \$7.50 a copy (discounts available on bulk orders) from the Circulation Department, *New York State Journal of Medicine*, 420 Lakeville Rd., P.O. Box 5404, Lake Success, N.Y. 11042, telephone number (516) 488-6100.

Copies of "The Cigarette Underworld" can be ordered from the publisher, Lyle Stuart Inc., 120 Enterprise Ave., Secaucus, N.J. 07094, at \$9.95 a copy (discounts available on bulk orders).

I hope you'll take advantage of Family Health Month as a ready-made opportunity to stress prevention and healthy lifestyles. And I hope the observance and these resources give you a running start on making prevention a daily priority in your practice.

Your patients—and their check-books—will be the winners if you do. □

1                    REPORT OF THE REFERENCE COMMITTEE ON  
2                    MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS, PUBLICATIONS, AND MISCELLANEOUS

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5 Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Delegates:

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7                    The Reference Committee on Membership Benefits,  
8 Publications, and Miscellaneous gave careful consideration  
9 to each of the items referred to it and submits the  
10 following report:

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12 ITEM 1

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14 ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF MEDICAL  
15 ASSISTANTS, NEW YORK STATE SOCIETY, INC. (84-KKK)

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17 RECOMMENDATION

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19                    Mr. Speaker, your reference committee recommends that the  
20 annual report of the Advisory Committee to the American  
21 Association of Medical Assistants, New York State Society,  
22 Inc. be filed for information.

23  
24                    Your reference committee noted that the American  
25 Association of Medical Assistants, New York State Society,  
26 celebrated its Silver Anniversary this year. Your reference  
27 committee would like to bring to the attention of the House  
28 that physicians encourage the participation of their  
29 employees in this organization.

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32 ITEM 2

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34 COMMITTEE ON LIBRARY, ARCHIVES, AND PUBLICATIONS (84-PP)

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36 RECOMMENDATION

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38                    Mr. Speaker, your reference committee recommends that the  
39 annual report of the Committee on Library, Archives, and  
40 Publications be filed for information.

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42                    Your reference committee noted the new format of the  
43 Journal and its reemergence as a prominent national medical  
44 publication and urges that members of the Society submit  
45 original articles and articles of note to the Journal,  
46 including letters to the Editor.