



# NEW YORK STATE JOURNAL OF MEDICINE

420 Lakeville Road, P.O. Box 5404, Lake Success, N.Y. 11042 • (516) 488-6100

Editor: Alan Blum, M.D.

FOR RELEASE AUGUST 12, 1985  
For further information, contact  
Dr. Alan Blum  
(516) 488-6100, ext 290 or 291

## RELIGIOUS GROUPS' SILENCE ON SMOKING LINKED TO DONATIONS FROM TOBACCO COMPANIES

NEW YORK -- Is the silence of most religious organizations on the subject of smoking and the 360,000 cigarette-related deaths in the US each year tied to the acceptance of money from tobacco companies? An article in the current issue of the New York State Journal of Medicine suggests this.

The acceptance by prominent Catholic, Jewish and other religious groups of donations from cigarette manufacturers is increasing, and the morality of this relationship has been ignored by religious leaders, according to the report in a special issue of the Journal on smoking and its promotion.

The sponsorship by cigarette manufacturer Philip Morris of art exhibitions with religious themes, such as the Vatican Collections, has reaped enormous favorable exposure for makers of Marlboro, including photographs in the mass media of Philip Morris executives alongside church dignitaries and political leaders.

In recent years religious organizations such as the National Conference on Christians and Jews, Catholic Charities, the United Jewish Appeal, and the American Jewish Committee have all hosted testimonial dinners for

tobacco company executives. The latest was the presentation in May by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith of an Americanism award to the "head of the Tobacco Institute. Spokesmen for most organizations offer little reason for honoring cigarette company executives, apart from gratitude for the companies' donations of money to the organizations.

Ironically, religious groups in tobacco states, such as the North Carolina Council of Churches, have led the way in identifying the immorality of profiting from the growing and selling of tobacco.

In a commentary in the Journal, the Reverend Collins Kilburn, executive director of the council asks whether the hundreds of thousands of deaths due to smoking in the US is not a moral concern for churches.

"In recent years masses of church people in North Carolina rallied behind the legislation to crack down on drunk driving. No one doubted that this was an urgent moral concern, because 25,000 people were being killed each year by drinking drivers. Fourteen times that number die from smoking-related diseases. Six times as many people die from smoking-related causes as from all kinds of automobile accidents in the United States."

Kilburn also condemns the stepped-up tobacco advertising in the poorest and hungriest nations of the world. "Is it necessary for the health of our economy to export addiction and disease?" he asks.

The article cites the acceptance of cigarette advertising by some publications that are affiliated with religious organizations. For instance, Hadassah Magazine, the official publication of a women's organization that raises funds for medical research and health care in Israel, publishes

health articles alongside cigarette advertisements. Such a setting represents an opportunity for tobacco companies to foster complacency or even a positive image about smoking.

One Catholic theologian, Father Michael Crosby, has sought through shareholder resolutions to force tobacco companies to reconsider their cigarette marketing practices in the Third World. Although such efforts have been unsuccessful, they have stimulated some groups such as the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility to re-examine their investment portfolios for possible links to cigarette companies.

The center's director, the Reverend Tim Smith, is dismayed by the increasing ties of cigarette companies to religious organizations. According to Smith, "They are pushing a series of lies to gain approval in society, in spite of what they provide and sell. It is the height of irony that the Vatican's religious art was sponsored by Philip Morris, who through advertising and promotion is one of the greatest contributors to the death and deterioration of millions of people."

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For further information, contact:

Dr. John W. Richards, Jr.

(404) 828-2739

or

Editorial Office

New York State Journal of Medicine

(516) 488-6100 ext 290 or 291

## DOCTORS URGE BOYCOTT OF DRUG STORES THAT SELL CIGARETTES

NEW YORK -- Leaders of a national organization of health professionals, DOC (Doctors Ought to Care), are calling upon physicians to boycott drug stores that sell tobacco products. The boycott call, described in a special issue of the New York State Journal of Medicine on smoking and its promotion, is based on the fact that use of tobacco results in the deaths of more than 360,000 Americans each year and is the nation's largest single preventable health problem.

In their report, "Pharmacists who dispense cigarettes: with reference to drug store chains and pharmaceutical companies," John W. Richards, Jr., MD, of the Medical College of Georgia, and Alan Blum, MD, editor of the Journal, cite numerous examples of conflicts of interest raised by health-related corporations and other organizations that have links to cigarette manufacturers. One division of the pharmaceutical company Hoechst-Roussel makes a widely used drug for heart failure (Lasix) and a drug to treat heart attack victims (Streptase), while another division is a leading maker of cigarette packaging materials. Pfizer, makers of heart medications and drugs for bronchitis, owns a tobacco flavoring products factory. Other drug companies supply pesticides to tobacco growers, and at least one pharmaceutical company president serves on the international advisory board of a major tobacco company. The Journal lists several advertising agencies retained by pharmaceutical companies to sell health-related products that also are designing aggressive campaigns to increase cigarette sales around the world and so undermine health.

The authors note that 25% of cigarette purchases in the US are made in pharmacies, and 8% of chain drug store profits are derived from the sale of cigarettes.

"Who can doubt that patients rationalize their adverse health behavior by pointing to the sale of cigarettes at the place where they are directed by physicians to obtain medications?" ask the authors, in urging their colleagues to patronize pharmacists who refuse to sell cigarettes.

A major obstacle to ending tobacco sales in pharmacies is the ownership of one of the largest drug store chains (Peoples) by a tobacco company.

The report appears in the current issue of the Journal, entitled, "The World Cigarette Pandemic -- Part II," a sequel to the December 1983 issue that has been republished as The Cigarette Underworld (Secaucus, Lyle Stuart). In May one of the major articles in that issue, "Cigarette advertising and The New York Times: an ethical issue that's unfit to print?" was named one of the top 25 national censored stories of 1984 by Project Censored of Sonoma State University.

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## CAUTION URGED ON NICOTINE CHEWING GUM

NEW YORK -- A report in the latest issue of the New York State Journal of Medicine challenges recent claims by the manufacturer of a nicotine-laced chewing gum that the product is a beneficial aid in stopping smoking.

In a review of the published research studies on the gum, also known as Nicorette, made by Merrell-Dow, Joseph Feldman, PhD, an associate professor in the Department of Preventive and Community Medicine of Downstate Medical Center, Brooklyn, expresses doubt that the findings -- in highly motivated persons evaluated for just a few weeks or months -- can be applied to the overall smoking population. Dr. Feldman found that in most studies the benefit of the gum diminishes with the length of follow-up and that the possible placebo effect of the gum has not been sufficiently evaluated.

Nicotine chewing gum is but the latest in a long line of tried but unproven remedies claimed to help in stopping smoking. Dr. Feldman warns that the false optimism that has been generated by wide publicity for the gum will lead to unfulfilled expectations. Indiscriminate use of the gum will lead to a higher incidence of side effects of nicotine.

Dr. Feldman urges physicians to exercise caution in prescribing nicotine chewing gum. In the absence of extensive supportive counseling, he says, the gum is not effective.



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## TOBACCO COMPANY TRADE PRACTICES CALLED "CORPORATE VIOLENCE"

NEW YORK -- Because the promotion of smoking by tobacco companies has caused many people to suffer serious physical harm, it should be considered as a form of violence, according to an article in the current issue of the New York State Journal of Medicine.

Joe Tye, a recent graduate of the Stanford University Graduate School of Business, calls cigarette company trade practices "corporate violence" to distinguish it from traditional definitions of criminal violence. Tye writes "the efforts of the cigarette industry to prevent consumers from learning about the dangers of smoking, to undermine public awareness of these dangers with sophisticated advertising techniques, and to promote smoking in new markets where people are not aware of the hazards have caused many people to suffer crippling diseases and early death."

Tye cites the example of advertising aimed at young women as an example of what he means by corporate violence. "Cigarette companies have concentrated substantial resources on convincing young women to smoke. Despite the virtually unanimous agreement of doctors that smoking can cause miscarriage, the industry has never provided female consumers with this information and has actively sought to prevent them from getting it. Last year, the cigarette

lobby was able to have the word 'miscarriage' replaced by 'complications of pregnancy' in the new warning labels. But to many young women, 'complications of pregnancy' is more likely to mean headaches and cramps than the possible death of her baby."

Tye concludes that the courts should award monetary damages to people who have been injured by tobacco products. He writes, "Despite the industry's own uncertainty about the safety of its product, in the 20 years since the Surgeon General's report, cigarettes have become the most heavily promoted product in the world, using advertising themes that appeal to young people. The courts are the only social mechanism that has the power to impose more responsible marketing practices on the cigarette industry."

Tye's article appears in a special issue of the Journal entitled, "The World Cigarette Pandemic -- Part II." Part I was published in December 1983 and has been reissued as The Cigarette Underworld (Secaucus, Lyle Stuart). In May one of the major articles in that issue, "Cigarette advertising and The New York Times: an ethical issue that's unfit to print?" was named one of the 25 most under-reported national news stories by Project Censored of Sonoma State University.

In related articles, the Journal analyzes the diversity of holdings of the tobacco industry. Presented on a state by state basis, the information provides an opportunity to identify the vested interests underlying the success of the tobacco lobby in such seemingly non-tobacco states as New York and California.

Two articles in the Journal explore the legal theories behind product liability lawsuits brought against tobacco companies by victims of



smoking-related diseases. According to Professor Donald Garner of the University of Southern Illinois School of Law, the first victory of a plaintiff in these cases may go to a victim of a cigarette-caused fire, such as a child sleeping in the next apartment. "Whereas everyone, including the smoker, may know that a cigarette dropped on a bed may start a fire," Garner writes, "that is an irrelevant consideration given the capacity of the cigarette manufacturers to market a cigarette that will not start a fire."

But Garner notes that the number of fire deaths (2,100) and injuries (9,500) attributed to cigarettes each year in the United States is small compared to the 360,000 annual deaths attributed to cigarette smoking. The flood of litigation that will be provoked if cigarette manufacturers lose the initial cigarette disease cases could lead them into bankruptcy, concludes Garner.

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