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Smoking and Health

Council on Scientific Affairs

AS EARLY as 1953, the Board of Trustees banned tobacco advertising from American Medical Association publications. House of Delegates actions on the subject of smoking and health have appeared with increasing frequency since the adoption in 1962 of Board of Trustees Report O, which expressed concern about the health hazards of tobacco products and encouraged research. The various antismoking resolutions submitted by state delegations during subsequent years evolved into Resolution 13 (C-68), which called for physicians to be

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nonsmoking exemplars and advisors, for the AMA to discourage smoking through public pronouncements and educational programs, and for the AMA to take a strong stand against smoking with every means at its command. In November 1969, this resolution was amended by the addition of a fourth resolve, directing the AMA to point out to Congress the incongruity of spending tax dollars for production and sale of tobacco, as well as for antismoking programs. Resolution 13, as amended, has been reaffirmed periodically.

In other actions the House has recommended separation of smokers and nonsmokers on commercial air-

craft, discouragement of smoking during House of Delegates meetings, AMA encouragement of the public to adopt healthful life-styles, including abstinence from tobacco products, use of AMA influence to get tobacco price supports discontinued, and cooperation with constituent societies in support of legislation to protect nonsmokers from tobacco smoke.

Given the fact that most Americans (including those who smoke) recognize the hazards of smoking, the growing national antismoking effort by public and private agencies, and the growing number and intensity of AMA official actions on the subject, it seems an appropriate time for the House to adopt a broader and stronger statement on smoking and health—one that recommends specific actions by physicians, the AMA itself, and government in parallel with private agencies.

Current Antismoking Activities

The three major national voluntary health agencies have been active in smoking education programs, especially since the first *Surgeon General's Report* in 1964. The American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association, and the American Lung Association conduct programs nationwide through their constituent bodies and also sponsor and promote national conferences. All three have been active in the effort to influence national and local legislation regarding all forms of tobacco use.

A report of the National Commission on Smoking and Public Policy, *A National Dilemma: Cigarette Smoking*

or the Health of Americans, to the Board of Directors of the American Cancer Society was published on Jan 31, 1978. Several of the recommendations are considered in the following comments. The report noted that "as members of a free society, we should recognize the rights of informed adults to smoke if they choose. To suggest otherwise would be to imply a prohibition, which is neither enforceable nor desirable in a democratic society." It deplored the failure of the executive and legislative branches to safeguard the public interest and the public health through regulation of the tobacco industry and recognized that cigarettes are "both a proven major health hazard and an economic drain" that should no longer be ignored.

There are also many local organizations such as Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) and Group Against Smoker's Pollution (GASP) that are actively seeking to ensure the rights of nonsmokers. The segregation of smokers and nonsmokers on commercial aircraft is the direct result of ASH's leadership.

The National Interagency Council on Smoking and Health (NIC) represents 33 organizations, including the AMA, that are concerned with the diseases and illness associated with tobacco use. The NIC has conducted national conferences for youth and has at present a contract with the US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (DHEW) to promote smoking education programs in schools. These programs are oriented toward student behavior and, in most

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