

CIGARETTES, ADVERTISING

The Advertising of Cigarettes. Editorial,
J.A.M.A. 138:652 (Oct. 10) 1948

J.A.M.A. and most other medical publications have carried cigarette advertising. Actual surveys indicate that majority of physicians smoke cigarettes. Extensive scientific studies have proved that smoking in moderation by those for whom tobacco is not specifically contraindicated does not appreciably shorten life. Postmortem examinations do not reveal lesions in any number of cases that could be definitely traced to the smoking of cigarettes. In all probability, from a psychologic point of view, more can be said of smoking as a form of escape from tension than against it. Several scientific works have been published for and against smoking and there does not seem to be preponderance of evidence that abolition of the use of tobacco as a substance contrary to public health is warranted. Editorial does not attempt to summarize evidence, rather to discuss the manner in which leading manufacturers lean so heavily on references to the medical profession in promoting their product. Advertising accepted by J.A.M.A. carefully screened and weighed. Gradually, however, claims point more and more to extent of throat irritation. Sales have increased from 10 billion in 1910 to 350 billion in 1946. Naturally competition grows and the merits of the use of glycerin over diethyleneglycol intensify the controversy. Tobacco with less nicotine is featured against that with more nicotine and cigarette with devices eliminating tar are adding flame to the battle.

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Obviously more refined technics of investigation for study are in order. None of the technics by which throat irritation is measured is standardized. It is difficult to differentiate between the irritation caused by the smoking of cigarettes and that caused by various bacteria, chemicals or heat.

The Federal Trade Commission has strived to hold the advertising within reasonable limits. As yet there is no decision as to claims justified by the evidence and those that are not. Further truly scientific studies and respect for intelligent advertising may obviate the need for further extensive and time-consuming trials.

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