

## AMA Shuns Stand on Cigaret-Health Issue; Promises Report on Subject in Year or So

By a WALL STREET JOURNAL Staff Reporter

CHICAGO -- A move to force the American Medical Association immediately to state its position on whether there are health hazards in smoking was defeated at the AMA's annual meeting here. But the nation's largest medical body promised a report on the subject in a year or so.

The House of Delegates, ruling body of the AMA, rejected a resolution that would have committed it to issue a public statement on smoking hazards.

The delegates approved a report announcing that the AMA's Council on Drugs will undertake a major study of tobacco and health. The Association hasn't taken a clear-cut position in the controversy over the effects of smoking. The British Royal College of Physicians recently asserted the preponderance of evidence implicates cigars as a cause of lung cancer and other disorders.

At a press conference, Dr. William C. Spring, secretary to the Council on Drugs, promised a preliminary report from the new study within a year. He said the council felt in past years that the evidence wasn't strong enough to warrant a thorough smoking study. He added that "new pressures" for such a study were behind the decision to undertake it. Among them, he said, was a request by Sen. Neuberger (D., Ore.) that the AMA take up the tobacco question. "It's time to stand up and be counted," Dr. Spring remarked.

### No Original Research

Dr. Spring said the study group will include only scientists. He said the AMA will attempt to select only men who aren't committed to either side of the controversy over whether tobacco leads to lung cancer, heart disease and related ailments. The committee won't perform original research, but instead will "analyze and critique" research already performed, Dr. Spring said.

Since the AMA represents about 188,000 of

the nation's 280,000 physicians, and has been traditionally conservative in making pronouncements on public health, it is expected that its smoking study will have a major impact on the tobacco industry and Government policy toward smoking. In Great Britain, the support of physicians has led to intensified government efforts to curb smoking.

The U.S. Public Health Service announced earlier this month that it plans its own "comprehensive review" of the smoking-and-cancer controversy. Surgeon General Terry said he will appoint "an expert advisory committee" to study and evaluate the evidence collected about the effects of smoking, and "make whatever recommendations may be appropriate."

### Member Discipline Action

In another action, the House of Delegates approved a change in AMA bylaws that will give the national association new authority to discipline members. The change allows the AMA to initiate action against any member charged with violations of ethics if it receives permission from the state medical society involved or is invited to investigate a member by the state society. The AMA could censure, suspend or withdraw membership in such cases. Currently, the AMA acts only as an appeal court after disciplinary action by state and local medical bodies.

Today the House of Delegates will wind up its meeting by considering resolutions on Federal medical care plans. A committee of the house refused to support a plan urging "non-participation" of AMA doctors in the Kennedy-backed proposal to finance medical care for the aged through social security. The proposal, the King-Anderson Bill, is currently in Congress.

The full House of Delegates is expected to endorse its committee's action. The committee reaffirmed opposition to the King-Anderson Bill, but chose to leave it to individual physicians to select their own method of opposition.