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AMA Authorizes Vast Tobacco Study

By the Associated Press

Portland, Ore.

The American Medical Association has authorized a long-range program of research on tobacco and health "designed to probe beyond statistical evidence."

The project will include chemical, pathologic, and clinical investigations and will probe physiological and psychological factors of the smoking habit, the AMA said in closing its 17th annual clinical meeting.

The research project will be financed by the AMA and private contributions "only if they are given without restrictions," trustees said. The AMA gave \$500,000 to its education and research foundation to help underwrite the project.

Findings Confirmed

Meanwhile, Dr. E. Cuyler Hammond, statistical research director of the American Cancer Society, reported to the physicians conclusions of "the largest and broadest study yet made on smoking in relation to death rates." It is a continuing study of 422,084 men.

He said it confirmed findings of six previous studies that fatality rates (from a number of diseases in addition to cancer) are far higher in cigarette smokers than in nonsmokers, increase with amount of smoking and decrease when smokers quit the habit.

The study includes much new information regarding effects of inhalation, age of beginning smoking, and other factors, Dr. Hammond said. Subjects—men between age 40 and 69—filled out long questionnaires and then were followed up for an average of 34.3 months.

Warning Recalled

It was just over four years ago, on Nov. 27, 1959, that the then Surgeon General of the Public Health Service, LeRoy E. Burney, warned:

"Unless the use of tobacco can be made safe, the individual's risk of lung cancer can be reduced best by the elimination of smoking."

The report was made public late in 1959 that it likely had little effect on smoking

statistics that year, and domestic consumption has increased each year since.

The Agriculture Department says domestic cigarette consumption rose annually from 438.4 billion in 1958 to 509 billion this year.

The new report is being prepared by a blue-ribbon scientific committee—chosen for lack of bias by Surgeon General Luther L. Terry.

Sources in close touch with the situation said it appears more than likely at present that the new report will be made public early in January, rather than by year's end as previously scheduled.

Stocks Jittery

In recent months the stock market's tobacco listings have been jittery in the face of speculation that the report would be critical of tobacco.

Committee sources have acknowledged that they are aware the report could have such reactions—and serious consideration is being given to disclosing the report on a Saturday when financial markets will be closed.

At the time the committee was starting its work in November, 1962, Dr. Terry said, "When this report is issued, I expect it to be the most comprehensive ever to be produced on the subject of smoking and health."

The committee was charged only with studying the nature of the health hazard, not to make recommendations.

Dr. Terry said a later study would be devoted to recommendations for action.

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AMA Decides To Study Tobacco-Health

The American Medical Association Wednesday decided to undertake a comprehensive program of its own research on tobacco and health.

The AMA, through its official governing body, the House of Delegates, also voted Wednesday to reaffirm to its component societies its 1960 position urging they not discriminate membership because of race.

The House of Delegates was asked by the Rhode Island delegation to pass a resolution denying membership in the AMA to those societies who discriminate, but the House steered away from the more drastic course, advocating again further efforts to help them change voluntarily.

The smoking study will seek to determine "which significant human ailments may be caused or aggravated by smoking, how they may be caused, the particular element or elements in smoke that may be the aggravating agent and methods for eliminating it."

The AMA, unlike its British counterpart, has not yet made official its stand on the smoking and health question. Many studies have been completed by many scientists, agencies and institutions on the question, including a comprehensive study by the U.S. Public Health Service. But this has not yet been made public.

The AMA resolution noted there is a mass of statistical information indicating certain relationships between smoking and disease "which cannot be ignored, even though the significance of them in terms of cause and effect is still being debated."

The original recommendation for the study came from a three-man committee on scientific activities of the Board of Trustees of the AMA. Its chairman is Dr. Charles L. Hudson of Cleveland, an internist. The other two members are Dr. Archie McKeown,

Loos Bay physician, and Dr. James Appel, Lancaster, Pa., surgeon.

The study will be given to the AMA's Education and Research Foundation, of which Dr. McKeown is president; Dr. Hudson, vice president and Dr. Appel one of the other three officers.

The first \$500,000 for ERF's work on this project was authorized later Wednesday by the AMA board of trustees. Other contributions, but with no strings attached, will be welcomed.

Dr. Hudson did not expect ERF could complete any such study very rapidly, pointing out that it takes a long time to do research, and that first task would be to search for a director to head the project.

Would it take many years? "A distinct possibility," he said.

The conservative-speaking doctor said that he did not believe the AMA had ever before undertaken a research project of this magnitude.

Last June the AMA passed a resolution pointing out the duty of doctors "in the light of our present knowledge, although incomplete, to point out the effects on the young of toxic materials, including tobacco." Dr. Hudson was asked if that resolution was in conflict with his Wednesday statement that the authorizing of the research project "does not assume there is a relationship between tobacco and disease."

He said that perhaps the June reference committee "made an assumption. We haven't stated that we know there is a relationship. We're trying to find out if there is a problem."