

Smoking and Health

Five years ago, AMA's House of Delegates established an educational campaign to discourage use of toxic materials—including tobacco—especially by young people.

This step was taken seven months before an Advisory Committee to the Surgeon General of the Public Health Service concluded in a 1964 report that "cigarette smoking is a health hazard of sufficient importance in the United States to warrant appropriate remedial action."

Following that report, the House of Delegates said in a statement of policy that there is "a significant relationship between cigarette smoking and the incidence of lung cancer and certain other diseases, and cigarette smoking is a serious health hazard."

Lack of success of anti-smoking campaigns in other countries led the Delegates to conclude that the acquisition of further experimental data would be needed to convince both the public and the profession. The House then urged the support of further research on problems of tobacco and health; and the Board of Trustees appropriated \$500,000 to initiate the program. Shortly after formation of the research project, six tobacco companies declared support—the total of which is now \$18,000,000—asking only that the money be used for the stated purposes of the project.

These purposes are to determine: which significant ailments might be caused or aggravated by smoking; those mechanisms by which cigarette smoking might affect health; and the particular substance or substances in smoke which might be the causal or aggravating agent.

Three of the five members of the initial Committee for Research on Tobacco and Health were mem-

Members of the Committee for Research on Tobacco and Health (AMA-ERF) are: Maurice H. SeEVERS, MD, PhD, Ann Arbor, Mich. *Chairman*; Richard J. Bing, MD, Detroit; Robert J. Hasterlik, MD, Chicago; John B. Hickam, MD, Indianapolis; Paul Kottin, MD, Research Triangle Park, NC; Paul S. Larson, PhD, Richmond, Va.; and Ira Singer, PhD, Chicago, *Secretary*.

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bers of the Advisory Committee to the Surgeon General. A fourth participated in an earlier Surgeon General's report on hazards of smoking.

In establishing the program, the committee noted the statement in the Advisory Committee's report that: "It is recognized that no simple cause-and-effect relationship is likely to exist between a complex product like tobacco smoke and a specific disease in the variable human organism."

The implication is obvious. Until the specific causes of cancer, and pulmonary, cardiac, and other diseases in which tobacco is implicated are substantiated, it will be necessary to rely on correlational data, epidemiological studies, and mortality ratios to assess the hazards of smoking. Competent research which sheds light on the relationships or lack of them between smoking and health should greatly advance also the understanding of many of the major disorders which cause disability and death. Research related to smoking and health is closely involved with circulatory disorders, respiratory disorders, neoplasia, and other major diseases.

The AMA-ERF Committee recognizes that incontrovertible answers are not in sight. But the effort must continue in confidence that, through patient persistence in research, such answers can and will be found.

Since 1964, 114 grants have been made by AMA-ERF to independent investigators around the world. Some of the first reports of their work were made at AMA's Annual Convention in San Francisco. These have been subjected to a variety of interpretations, including the inference that AMA is abandoning its 1964 position that cigarette smoking is a serious health hazard.

In the opinion of the Committee for Research on Tobacco and Health of the AMA Education and Research Foundation, no new evidence has been adduced in these studies or elsewhere which would substantially alter the conclusions of the 1964 Advisory Committee report or change the policy of the AMA House of Delegates as expressed four years ago.