
T H E B U L L E T I N B O A R D

MAY / JUNE, 1991

[The Bulletin Board is sent to NCAHF members only. It is intended to stimulate and aid in activism against health fraud, misinformation and quackery at the local, state and national levels.]

NCAHF FACES SERIOUS FINANCIAL SHORTFALL

The recession seems to be responsible for a major slowdown in renewals that has left NCAHF nearly \$10,000 short for the calendar year thus far. We are hopeful that this trend will reverse itself soon, but if it does not, the very survival of NCAHF as presently constituted may be affected. New memberships and subscriptions seem to be keeping pace, and media exposure is greater than ever, but renewals, NCAHF's mainstay, are at an all-time low. If you haven't renewed, please do so now.

NCAHF'S PROBLEM is its limited work force. If efforts are shifted to membership promotions or fund-raising, it would dilute NCAHF's antiquackery activities. It could find itself working to sell a service of diminished quality. We have chosen to maintain the quality and hope that this will sell itself. NCAHF must count heavily upon its members to spread its rational consumer protection message and promote membership whenever possible.

IS YOUR PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION A MEMBER OF NCAHF?

Health, legal and academic professionals support NCAHF because it provides an opportunity for them to meet some of the consumer protection responsibilities to society that they bear. Professional societies at one time were much more aggressive against quackery than they are today. Many are afraid to get involved because quacks are quick to threaten legal actions against their critics and the facts needed to refute quackery are often difficult to obtain. NCAHF believes that every professional journal should carry regular articles on consumer protection. NCAHF can help professional societies accomplish this. Members should encourage their professional societies to join NCAHF as Supporting Members (\$100 per year). NCAHF not only permits, it encourages, republication of its materials--without cost. NCAHF will help professional societies improve the knowledge level of professionals and their communities about health fraud, misinformation and quackery. The financial impact of quackery upon the income of professionals is small, but its impact upon the health and well-being of patients, clients and students can be enormous. Why not help your society do a better job of consumer protection, help the public, and help support NCAHF by canvassing your professional society to take out a Supporting membership.

LLU TO OFFER ANTIQUACKERY COURSE

The LLU School of Public Health will be offering a graduate level course entitled "Controversial Health Practices" to be taught by William Jarvis, Fall Term, Wednesdays, 4-6 pm. Students may enroll for two units of didactic or three units which includes a one-unit equivalent project. For information contact Dr. Jarvis at the Main Office.

THE NATIONAL ENQUIRER & QUACKERY

The nation's leading tabloid, *The National Enquirer* has taken another swipe at quackery. The 4/23/91 issue carried a story on the dangers of chiropractic neck manipulation that brought several victims and the attorneys of victims to NCAHF for information and assistance. In 1990, the *NE* carried a story on high tech medical scams featuring warnings by NCAHF's Drs. William Jarvis and James Lowell. Surprised? An analysis of the reliability of health-related information in the tabloids during the summer of 1987 by Dr. Stephen Barrett found the *Enquirer* to be the most reliable of five major tabloids (see *Priorities*, Summer, 1989). Barrett found that 55% of the tabloid's articles to be well-written and noted that in many cases the 25% judged to be "questionable" could have been made reliable by simple modifications. Particularly useful were Barrett's tips for better reporting of health news.

CLINICAL ECOLOGISTS NUMBERS EXAGGERATED

Last issue we reported on clinical ecology guru William Rea, MD, who was profiled in *D magazine*. The article quoted Rea as stating that there were "4,000 physicians practicing aspects of clinical ecology, and their numbers are swelling." Thomas Kurt, MD, Chairman of the DFW Council Against Health Fraud provided NCAHF with a copy of the 1989 *Register of the American Board of Environmental Medicine* which lists 31 clinical ecologist physicians. Kurt believes that the 4,000 figure is used to create an illusion that the field is much larger than it actually is. Although Rea's number included all practicing "some aspect" of clinical ecology, it seems clear that the number willing to declare themselves to be specialists in the field is small.

Please send items of possible interest to NCAHF members for *The Bulletin Board* or for readers of the *NCAHF Newsletter* to NCAHF, P.O. Box 1276, Loma Linda, CA 92354; FAX 714-824-4838. Provide clear copies suitable for photocopying, and include complete references for citation purposes.

RANKING HIGH QUACKERY STATES

Dr. John Renner got the attention of the people of Colorado in March 27 when quoted in an article entitled: "Colorado high on the quackery list." Citing such features as: high per capita numbers of health food stores and chiropractors; Colorado Springs as the home-base of anti-amalgamist Hal Huggins, DDS; an annual AIDS Medicine & Magic Conference in Boulder; and, Aurora as the home-base of the National Institute for Nutritional Education which is the source of the home study (accredited) course set up by the National Nutritional Foods Association to "educate" health foods store personnel, Renner stated that Colorado would be sure to make the Top 10 in his ranking of areas rife with quackery. More than 50 letters came in to *The Rocky Mountain News* following the article—including one from the president of the Colorado chapter of the National Health Federation—complaining bitterly about Renner's accusations. After having been made aware of the media flap that was taking place there, NCAHF president William Jarvis wrote a letter to the editor suggesting that the number of letters that come in to a newspaper following an anti-quackery article should be added to the list of criteria used to rank states. The *RMN* published Jarvis' letter on May 5. Drs. Renner and Jarvis are developing criteria that can be used on an on-going basis to rank states as to the amount of quackery found therein. Your suggests are welcomed.

PERSONS PRACTICING CONTROVERSIAL METHODS OF CANCER CARE CAN EXPECT SEVERE CRITICISM

Grace Monaco communicates that the libel action by Stanislaus Burzynski against Aetna, its trial counsel Emprise, and her, has been dismissed. She notes: "It is established that persons practicing highly controversial methods of dealing with cancer which are not generally accepted medical practice can expect severe and detailed criticism." She cites Spelson v. CBS: "There may be no more serious or critical issue extant today than the health of human beings. Given the frailty of human existence, any controversy on the subject must be afforded wide open discussion and criticism so that individuals may make well educated health care choices. This is especially so in cases where serious disease is involved or death is imminent."

CHIROPRACTORS IMPROVING COURTROOM PERFORMANCES

New York Journalist, Norman Bauman, writes that there is a new breed of chiropractor out there who is better educated and more articulate than in the past is "Chiropractors: can't get no respect! (or can they?)" in the Spring, 1991, issue of *Insurance Settlements Journal*, (pp.12-23). Anyone facing DCs in court will find this article worth reading. Available from NCAHF; \$3 plus SSAE.

ESSAY CONTEST ON QUACKERY

The San Bernardino County Public Health Department's Nutrition Quackery Prevention Task Force developed a regular column entitled "Nutrition Alert: ducking Quackery." Interest and awareness in the column has been increased by conducting an essay contest on health and nutrition issues for high school students. It is clear that students want honest,

safe and effective products, and are concerned the exploitation of consumers by quacks. Unfortunately, they do not always seem to be able to spot the bogus, but simply play back the messages promulgated by the media. Although most seemed to have a grasp upon the folly of steroid use and starving (anorexia nervosa), some clearly had been influenced by health food industry lies. One misguided kid wrote that the way to improve everyone's health is to get them all on HerbaLife! The San Bernardino County group continues to set the pace on how to persistently deliver a credible consumer health message to the community through public health.



Masthead used on column written by the
San Bernardino County Public Health Department's
Nutrition Quackery Prevention Task Force

MORE ON VITAMINS & IQ

The claim reported in the March-April *NCAHF Newsletter* by Schoenthaler, et al, that RDA-dose vitamin supplements improve the nonverbal performance of some children raised skepticism; and, the huckstering of vitamins that accompanied the report raised cynicism. NCAHF has obtained a copy of the study and find that it is hard to fault the researchers on their methodology, but some real questions have been raised concerning their interpretation of the results. Steve Blinkhorn, managing director of Psychometric Research and Development Ltd, states that the style and interpretation of the difference in scores of the students alleged to have improved on supplementation is "psychometrically naive and thoroughly misleading." He says: "The purported significant elevation of IQ as a result of vitamin treatment is a feeble thing at best—it is neither robust across different tests, nor large, and the claim that it relates to non-verbal rather than verbal tests is not supported by the data." He states that parents who buy vitamins to improve their childrens' IQ's are "being misled" (*Nature*, 3/7/91, p.13). In any case, the study should not be difficult to repeat. The doses are harmless and the observation criteria are easily applied. The study is referenced in *Person. Individ. Diff.*, 12:(4):351-362, 1991. (NCAHF will supply a photocopy for \$3 and a SSAE).

A POINT OF HARMONIC CONVERGENCE?

The reasons that Hollywood personalities and the British aristocracy exhibit a fascination with, and propensity to patronize, quacks appears to be that: (1) both have too much time on their hands (ie, to be bored or to think about death); (2) both have too much money (after reasonable needs and wants are met, all there is left to buy is the superfluous); (3) neither are particularly intelligent (able to discern fallacies); and, (4) both suffer from ego-mania (unaware that the reason people seek, and seem to place a high value upon, their opinions is because they are celebrities glamorized by the