

NCAHF THE BULLETIN BOARD

MAY / JUNE, 1993

***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 & national levels.**

"ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE" PROPONENTS GATHER

May 20-23 the NIH Office of Alternative Medicine, National Museum of Health and Medicine, National Wellness Coalition, and U.S. Botanical Garden presented a conference titled *Alternative Medicine, Wellness, & Health Care Reform: Preparing for a Sustainable Future*, held at the National Museum of Health and Medicine and the Dirksen Senate Office Building (Co-sponsors: Taoist Health Institute and Center for Natural and Traditional Medicine). On the agenda were ayurvedic medicine, Chinese medicine, chiropractic, curanderismo healing, herbalism, homeopathy, massage therapy, nutritional approaches to treating chronic diseases, wholistic treatment for AIDS, obstacles in western medicine to using "alternative" approaches, and more. Except for the NIH officials, the speakers are mostly self-serving advocates. Some notables include Marilyn Ferguson (author of *Aquarian Conspiracy*), Jeffrey Blumberg, PhD (Tufts University nutritionist who has been fronting for the supplement industry), David Eisenberg, MD (see Newsletter), Tiffany Field (U. of Miami *Touch Research Institute* [emphasis added]). The conference has a laudable goal: "A sustainable future provides for the fulfillment of human needs by placing a higher value on long-term humanistic and ecological concerns than on short-term economic and technological gain. Applied to health care, the principles of sustainability call for a greater emphasis on prevention, self-care, lifestyle changes, and combined use of *proven* (emphasis added) cost-effective natural medical and health methods with high-technology conventional medical practices." None of us will argue with this, but the question will be, what will pass for "proof"? Experience has taught that when it comes to rhetoric, it's hard to beat the "alternative medicine" crowd, it's only when one asks for substance that they get nasty.

CHIROS RESPOND TO THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

The *Wall Street Journal* (4/19/93) ran some letters to the editor that were received following its critical article on chiropractors marketing themselves as pediatric specialists. Incredibly, one DC accused the *WSJ* of conspiring with MDs and drug companies because of the financial impact it would have on their cash flow if chiros treated kids! A chiropractic college president followed the ACA line of condemning the wrongdoers, but claiming that such abuses "are no less true of allopathic medicine" (which we highly doubt). A third took exception to the description of chiropractic's history, claiming that chiropractic's evolution was no different than that of medicine and osteopathy (wrong!). It presented a distorted picture of both the history of medicine and chiropractic! The *WSJ* titled the piece "We can feel the bias in our bones." DC-watchers may want to read what these apologists had to say.

FAILURE TO FIGHT QUACKERY IN THE UK

Caroline Richmond, the founder and past secretary of NCAHF's counterpart in the United Kingdom (now a freelance writer) describes the struggle with quackery in the UK ("Failure to attack quackery draws fire in the UK," *Canadian Med Assoc J*, 1993;148:1033-4). She reports on the refusal of the General Medical Council (GMC), the national medical licensing board, to tackle the quackery issue in connection with clinical ecology. GMC chairman, Sir Robert Kilpatrick, said that the GMC was not founded to protect the public from quacks, and that it did not have the power to investigate new treatments. It appears that the UK has much the same kind of a problem that exists within many US jurisdictions. Medical licensing boards exist to look after their own licensees. Fraud may be prosecuted as misrepresentation and/or theft, but what of misguided quackery? In states that have attempted to police quackery, (eg, California) there has been no real problem in deciding what is valid. The same rules of evidence apply that are used to judge a drug or medical device under food and drug law. The main deterrent seems to be the political problem of facing placard-waving patients whose health neurosis is being served by a quack. The media too often makes heroes of them and their quack gurus. It's easier to take sides against the doctors who are generally seen as over paid and privileged. Richmond tells of a man in the UK who has been awarded nearly \$250,000 because his chronic fatigue was worsened by a car accident in which he was not even injured! The lobby group to have "myalgic encephalomyelitis" recognized as a real disease, not simply a psychiatric problem, were overjoyed. Just as in the USA, groups of patients who suffer from self-denied psychiatric problems have organized themselves against scientific health care. It is little wonder that fringe doctors have support groups to help them fight the licensing boards and regulatory agencies. This is a phenomena quackbusters need to understand so they can explain why some people offer testimonials for obvious quackery.

CALIFORNIA INTRODUCES LEGISLATION TO LIMIT CONDITIONS CHIROPRACTORS MAY TREAT

One of the fall-outs of the *Wall Street Journal* article on chiropractic mistreatment of children has been the introduction of AB 2294 in the California legislature that would specify that "a license to practice chiropractic does not authorize the treatment of infectious disease." Two NCAHF board members testified in favor of the legislation: Dr. John Bolton representing the American Academy of Pediatrics and Dr. Seth Asser, Coordinator of NCAHF's Task Force on Child Health Threats. If this legislation passes, it could provide a model for the rest of the country to protect children from the predations of misguided chiropractors.

FDA NEEDS HELP WITH GETTING NLEA REFORMS

We hear from within the FDA that the agency is going to need help if it is to bring about the reforms intended by the 1990 Nutrition Labeling and Education Act (NLEA). The health food, dietary supplement and herbal remedies industries are pulling out all of the stops to derail the intent of NLEA. These industries fear the legal requirements that they tell the truth like a hydrophobic dog fears water. NCAHF has a copy of their battle plan and samples of what they have been communicating to each other and to Congress. The health hucksters are working for all they are worth to push the Big Lie on consumers: "write to congress today or kiss your vitamins good-bye" they say, while making themselves look like the answer to the high cost of health care. Insiders tell us that it is essential for Congress people to hear from both sides. They know that they are dealing with self-serving special interest groups when the health food lobby gets after them. What they need to know is that the other side is gravely concerned. We recommend that members read "The Dietary Supplement Debate of 1993: An FDA Perspective" a presentation by Michael R. Taylor, Deputy Commissioner for Policy at FDA which was presented at the annual meeting of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology at New Orleans, 3/31/93; it is available from NCAHF; send a double-stamped, SSAE).

FROM THE OTHER SIDE: PROPONENT EXPLAINS RELATIONSHIP OF ELECTRODIAGNOSIS, HOMEOPATHY AND ACUPUNCTURE

F. Fuller Royal, MD, owner-operator of The Nevada Clinic (Las Vegas) is a leading proponent and spokesman for off-beat medicine. Those who saw the expose of homeopathy by *NBC Dateline* last December will remember Royal as the doctor who told the show's producer that his problems may well have stemmed from a miscarriage his mother had three years prior to his conception! To his credit, Royal is articulate and has done a service by describing the views of his ilk regarding the use of galvanic devices used to measure electrical resistance at alleged acupuncture points, and to prescribe homeopathic remedies. His article, "A review of the history and scientific bases of electrodiagnosis and its relationship to homeopathy and acupuncture," (*Amer J Acupuncture*, 1991;19:137-152) mixes questionable and authentic data in a way that suits his purposes, but nevertheless is valuable because it pulls together many diverse ideas. I believe that it is representative of the thinking of leaders in the field. Anyone who must confront the proponents of electrodiagnosis (*aka*, Energy Medicine) will benefit from reading this lengthy, but legible monograph.

MORE ON HEALTH FOOD PRICES

In the last issue we cited a newspaper account of high health food prices. The May issue of *Environmental Nutrition* carries an article by NCAHF's Ira Milner, RD, that compares the prices and healthfulness of 16 health food store versus supermarket products. The article contains a table comparing products with comments that would be useful for educational purposes.

INTERESTING ALLIANCE

April 6-11 saw the *First International Symposium on Functional Medicine* convene at Wailea, Maui, Hawaii. The symposium was sponsored by Kraft General Foods (the tobacco people), Quaker Oats, HealthComm, Inc. (Jeffrey Bland, PhD - the health food industry's leading salesman), Doctors Data (a hair analysis service), Metagenics (herbals, dietary supplements, glandulars), Protein Technologies, Inc., Takeda Chemical Products, USA (free amino acids), and others. Speakers included Jeffrey Blumberg, PhD (USDA Human Research Center, Tufts University) who seems to be making a great many of these fringe conferences. He was among the speakers at the NIH Alternative Medicine conference mentioned elsewhere in this issue, and recently addressed a gathering of NuSkin distributors telling them that they were doing a great public service by selling supplements. Blumberg was quoted in the *Time Magazine* (4/6/92) cover story on the allegedly new wonders of vitamins. He also is the author of the monograph *U.S. RDA versus RDI: Protecting the Health of Americans versus Minimizing Nutrient Needs* which challenges FDA's concept of Recommended Daily Intakes (RDIs) proposed to replace RDAs as more realistic; something opposed by the supplement trade group because of its adverse (estimated 40% slash) impact on vitamin sales.

CRUISE SHIP QUACKERY

A NCAHF member recently returned from a vacation aboard a cruise ship. Appalled by the amount of quackery that he saw on board in the so-called "beauty parlors" and "health centers," he wrote to Douglas Ward, whom our member described as "the most influential writer in the cruise industry." Our member hoped that Ward would write a commentary on the sad state of affairs. Instead Ward wrote back accusing our member of being "an ignorant tool of the medical establishment, and that mud packs were proven, valid treatments, and that cruise ship passengers had a right to seek alternative medical practitioners." It turns out that Ward claims to be "a qualified osteopath" in the UK. Our member wrote back to Ward displaying keen insight into the osteopathic situation in the UK. Our member noted that there are two streams of osteopaths in the UK: those who take postgraduate training in osteopathy after completing a standard medical program (whose stature is a matter of controversy among physicians), and the graduates of osteopathic trade schools that has little to do with medicine. This second stream, our member says, "is composed of quacks, in the same sleazy category as chiropractors, homeopaths and naturopaths and assorted other cranks in the great tradition of British eccentrics." He added that Ward had not specified which category he belonged in. The lesson here is that it still pays to complain about quackery even when the outcome seems to be like the ending of a comedy in which the criminal admits that "crime does not pay" and then drives off in a limousine!

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 909-824-4838. Provide clear (not Fax) copies suitable for photocopying, and complete references for citation purposes.