

# THE NCAHF BULLETIN BOARD

JULY / AUGUST, 1996

**The NCAHF Bulletin Board is sent to NCAHF members and complimentary media NCAHF Newsletter recipients only. It is intended to stimulate and aid in activism against health fraud, misinformation and quackery at the local, state & national levels.**

## WASHINGTON, DC AREA NETWORK COORDINATOR

H. Jeffrey Orbach, DDS, has been appointed NCAHF Area Network Coordinator for the greater metropolitan Washington, DC and the surrounding area (postal zip codes 20000 to 22300). Members residing in the area, or nearby, who wish to be active in some way should contact Dr. Orbach at Randolph Medical Center, Suite 210, 4701 Randolph Road, Rockville, MD 20852; telephone 301-881-3368; fax: 301-881-3096. In addition to dental matters, Dr. Orbach's interests include nutrition and the elderly.

## PSYCHIC FRIENDS LAMPOONED

Mental health-related quackery is probably the most widespread of all kinds (it probably could be argued that all quackery is mental health-related). Because mental health-related quackery often involves transcendent beliefs, the proximity to religion makes it a difficult area to tackle. Whenever something appears that enables a teacher to deal with this field we like to make readers aware of it. Many have mentioned their disappointment with celebrities who publicly endorse psychic nonsense. Outstanding has been Dionne Warwick who now seems to be more identified with the Psychic Friends Network (PFN) than with pop music. Charles Memminger lampooned the PFN in his column *Honolulu Lite* in which he pretends to have launched a counterpart, the Psychic Enemies Network (PEN). PEN differed from PFN in that instead of doing "cold readings" it told the truth—such as, "Good morning, welcome to the Psychic Enemies Network! You're going to die." Memminger proceeds humorously to expose some of the methodology of psychology of self-styled "psychics." Sometimes humor offers a way to get at serious problems. This is a time that it succeeds. Think about it—phony psychics (a redundancy) openly operate as mental health counselors. People actually make important decisions that affect their lives, finances, and health. The law won't touch them. Only education can make a dent. This article can help. (Reprint in May-June, *Skeptical Inquirer*)

## NO RETRIAL FOR MINNESOTA DAIRYMAN WHO SOLD MILK CURE

Herbert Saunders, the Odin, Minnesota dairy farmer who sold colostrum as a remedy for serious ills, will not be retried. People with serious diseases would contact Saunders for help. He would sell them a dairy cow for \$2,500 and then inject a sample of the patron's blood into the udder of the pregnant cow. After the cow gave birth, Saunders would give the customer the colostrum (colostrum is a pre-milk excretion which is thought to impart immunity factors to newborns, but there is no evidence that it improves the immunity of adults). Saunders' trial ended with six jurors voting 5-1 for conviction in March, 1995. Saunders lost an attempt to have the Minnesota Court of Appeals state's law against practicing medicine without a license declared unconstitutional. On May 20, the Watonwan County Attorney announced that Saunders would not be retried. Saunders believes that his actions are justified on the basis of freedom of choice for

his customers to buy his services. This is the all-too-common upside-down reasoning which misdirects attention from the seller-profitier who promotes false remedies to the desperate disease-sufferer who hopes for a benefit. One of the reasons the County Attorney decided not to retry the case was that there were no witnesses available to testify against Saunders, but several who said that the remedy provided "some incredible benefits." On the face of it, this seems to vindicate Saunders, but the realities can be far different. A problem with this type of consumer crime is that the victims either may not consider themselves to have been victims, or may not be available to testify. Assuming that the remedy is totally worthless\*, following are possible scenarios as to why witnesses may not be available to testify: (1) The user is dead. (2) The user may be unwilling to testify because he/she does not want to get involved due to fear of the legal system. Promoters often make their customers believe that the government is so oppressive that people who use unapproved remedies may be prosecuted. This is untrue, unless the situation involves a child. A parent who fails to provide medical necessities may be charged with child endangerment. (3) Many times victims fear social censure. Society stigmatizes the victims of quackery as fools impossible to protect from their own folly. (4) Some simply do not want to relive the painful memories that bereaving has healed. (5) With others, their expectations were such that they do not feel cheated; ie, they knew that they were grasping at straws and are not bitter. (6) There are those who may have felt better due to the body's natural healing processes, the ups and downs normal symptoms follow, or the effects of some other procedure.

\*We acknowledge the remote possibility that some real effect could have happened in some cases, but want to examine the knotty problem of how a completely useless remedy can appear to have been beneficial on an experiential level.

## COMING IN THE FALL

Raso's list of odd and unusual healing procedures. Jack Raso has identified over 1,000 "alternative" and "complementary" healing methods that have a metaphysical aspect. Many have been around for a long time but are so esoteric that most people, including some of us who track quackery, have never heard of them. Jack has just finished a book manuscript listing these, and we expect the tome to be out in the fall. At NCAHF's request, he is going to make this dictionary of descriptive terms available on computer diskette. We will let readers know how they may obtain this resource when it becomes available.

## EPHEDRINE "UPPERS" BANNED IN FLORIDA

Florida's Department of Agriculture has banned substances with "relatively high" levels of ephedrine. The department of agriculture acted on the basis that herbal supplement products are being marketed as "foods." This action was prompted by reports of deaths and other complaints. This shows that there is a way for states to act to protect their citizens from dangerous dietary supplements now that the congress has stripped Americans of consumer protection by passing the ill-conceived 1994 Dietary Supplements Health & Education Act.

### **HERBERT PETITIONS FOR ANTIOXIDANT WARNING**

On June 5, 1996, NCAHF board member, Victor Herbert, MD, JD, petitioned FDA Commissioner David Kessler, MD, JD, to require all sellers of "antioxidant" supplements to place consumer protection warnings on their labels that reflect recent scientific findings regarding some of these substances. Beta carotene supplements should warn that the substance has been shown to promote lung cancer in smokers. Vitamin C supplements promote the generation of harmful free radicals in a subset of the population (about 12%) with high body iron. Vitamin E supplements increase the risk of hemorrhagic stroke for people with a family history this malady. Anyone who wishes to write a letter supporting the petition may obtain a copy of the two-page document from the Resource Center, 300 E. Pink Hill, Independence, MO 64057, or write directly to Dr. Kessler at the FDA, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20857.

### **TRACKING THE HEALTH FRAUD INDUSTRY ON THE INTERNET**

Now that the health food industry has been clearly identified as a major form of organized crime in the field of consumer health, it is worth tracking from the inside. A Web site called "New Hope Communication" lists companies, trade organizations, distributors, publishers, and miscellaneous news articles concerning the health food industry. Address: <http://www.newhope.com>.

### **STATES WHERE MARKETING HOMEOPATHIC REMEDIES MAY BE ILLEGAL**

At least 5 states have statutes that may make it illegal for pharmacists to sell homeopathic remedies:

**Alabama:** A pharmacist should never knowingly condone the dispensing, promoting, or distributing of drugs or medical devices, or assist therein, that are not of good quality, that do not meet standards required by law, or *that lack therapeutic value for the patient*. Business Regulation 680-X-2.22(b)

**Tennessee:** Identical language as above. Business Regulation 1140-3-.03(2)

**Wyoming:** Identical language as above. Business Regulation Chapter IV: Section 2(b)

**New Hampshire:** Never condone the dispensing, promoting or distributing of drugs or medical devices, or assist therein, which are not of good quality, which do not meet standards required by law, or which *lack therapeutic value for the patient*. Business Regulation Ph 501.01(2)

**New York:** New Drugs. 1. No person shall sell, deliver, offer for sale, hold for sale, or give away any new drug, unless **a.** an application with respect thereto has become effective, or in the case of an investigational drug the sponsor has complied with the applicable requirements, under the federal food, drug, and cosmetic act, or **b.** when not subject to such act, *such drug has been tested and has not been found to be unsafe or ineffective* for use under the conditions prescribed, recommended or suggested in the labeling thereof, and prior to the selling or offering for sale such drug, there has been filed with the department an application setting forth (1) full reports of investigations which have been made to show whether or not such drug is safe and effective for use; (2) a full list of the ingredients used as components of such drug; (3) a full statement of the composition of such drug; (4) a full description of the methods used in, and the facilities and controls used for, the manufacture, processing and packaging of such drugs; (5) such samples of such drug and the ingredients used as components thereof. (NY PracAct 6817

### **ASHEVILLE, NC SAID TO BE NEW AGE CENTER**

According to an *Associated Press* report\*, Asheville, NC, has been added to the list of places of harmonic convergence where quackery thrives. There are those who believe that "a vortex of natural energy" is centered in and around this Blue Ridge Mountain community. Asheville now contains psychospiritual counselors, spiritualist mediums, massage therapists, aura readers, Indian medicine men, health/natural food promoters, dream readers, radical environmentalists, herbalists, homeopaths, hypnotherapists, crystal peddlers, muscle-testers (kinesiologists), and designers of solar homes, geodesic domes, yurts, and teepees. The report says that "Asheville is fast challenging Sedona, Arizona, as a mecca for the New Age movement." The report tells of a Halloween gathering last year of 300 people, "most of them from the Church of Wicca, a naturalistic group that identifies with witchcraft." Some local Baptists were there to confront the Wiccans. Like other such centers, Asheville is an art colony and gathering site for counter-culture types.

\**Hendersonville Times-News*, 5/13/96.

### **RISKS OF SPINAL MANIPULATION**

Researchers in the Netherlands known for doing meta-analyses on controversial health care procedures have reviewed the literature on the complications of spinal manipulation. From this review it seems reasonable to say that 2.5-5 per 100,000 patients are at risk of stroke; or, 2-4 serious complications per million manipulations of the neck. Consistent with NCAHF's 1985 position paper on chiropractic, the benefit-risk for low back manipulation is acceptable if contraindications are observed, but the benefit-risk for neck manipulation is not acceptable. The authors say that a prospective study of the risks is urgently needed. [*J Family Practice*, 1996;42:475-80]

**Comment.** We agree that a prospective study is needed. However, it is important to differentiate between the sudden-force neck manipulation used by most chiropractors, and the controlled mobilization used by non-chiropractors.

### **MANAGED CARE AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE**

Stephen Barrett, MD, gives managed care administrators something to think about as they consider what types of alternative therapies might be appropriate for their programs. After alerting readers to the definitional problems of *genuine*, *experimental*, and *questionable* alternatives, Barrett points out that when it comes to new and unusual health care methods "novel does mean nonsensical." Under "When lobbyists prescribe," Barrett points to efforts by chiropractors to force by law managed care programs to employ their services. He exposes the public relations charade currently being done to make chiropractic appear to be more cost-effective than other methods. Acupuncture, homeopathy and naturopathy are also put into useful perspective. If members know of any managed care programs that are considering any of these, this article should be provided to the decision-makers. ("Managed care has no place for unscientific 'therapies'," *Managed Care*, May, 1996, pp.36+)

William Jarvis will be out of the office July 1-Aug 26. Paula Benedict will be in on a limited basis. Filling ARM list orders will be slow. Direct calls to Dr. John Renner at 816-228-4595, or Dr. Wallace Sampson at 408-885-4142.

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.