

THE NCAHF BULLETIN BOARD

JANUARY / FEBRUARY, 1997

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.

ANNUAL MEETING

The 1997 General Membership Meeting and the Spring meeting of the NCAHF Board of Directors will be held at 9 am on Sunday, March 16 at the Holiday Inn, Bayside, in San Diego.

"HEALTH FREEDOM" GROUPS TO LOBBY CONGRESS

Organized quackery is marshalling its forces to obtain legislation that will force health insurers to pay for "alternative" and "complementary" medicine. Such legislation has been called "Access to Medical Treatment" in the past. NCAHF members are urged to join these "grassroots" groups to uncover their true nature and interest in pushing unapproved, questionable medicine. NCAHF has the names and addresses of contact people in 12 states (AZ, CA, KY, LA, MO, NJ, NY, OH, SC, TX, VA, WI). Contact the main office or Resource Center for more information.

PHYSICIAN'S GUIDELINES FOR CHOOSING A REFERRAL CHIROPRACTOR

NCAHF member physician Paul Brown of Minnesota has been tracking chiropractic for many years. He authored a very useful article to aid physicians in determining the appropriateness of a chiropractor to whom they might be willing to refer patients. His article, "The new low back pain guidelines: should you refer to a chiropractor?" was published in *Emergency Medicine*, October, 1996, pp.86+.

MINNESOTA CHAPTER DISSOLVED

Paula J. Nessa, Secretary-Treasurer of the Minnesota Council Against Health Fraud notified NCAHF that the Chapter has become defunct when the president moved away, and no one else in the organization had the time needed to keep the organization going. The Chapter's funds have been turned over to NCAHF and deposited into the general account. NCAHF encourages any Minnesota member who wishes to consider becoming an Area Network Coordinator for the state or some part thereof.

CANADA'S REGULATION OF ELECTROMAGNETIC DEVICES

Canada is the USA's number-one trading partner, and among the items that cross the international border are the products of quackery. It is important for residents on both sides of the line to understand consumer protection laws and the agencies that enforce them in the neighboring country. The Canadian Health Protection Branch (HPB) functions much like the FDA. In Canada, manufacturers are required to test devices for safety and efficacy. The HPB has the authority to investigate medical device problems and to stop the sale of such devices when necessary. For details on questionable electromagnetic devices being marketed in Canada, request a copy of *It's Your Health: Electromagnetic Devices* (HPB Canada, 12/12/95). For insight on medical device regulation in the USA, see "FDA and medical devices." *FDA Consumer*, 12/96.

BURZYNSKI TRIAL UNDERWAY

The trial of Stanislaw Burzynski was scheduled to begin in early January in Houston. U.S. District Court Judge Sim Lake has ruled that whether or not Burzynski's remedy is effective is not relevant in this case. He said that unless persuaded otherwise he will not allow such testimony. One way to introduce such evidence might be through a "necessity" defense claim that laws were broken to save lives. [*Chicago Tribune*, 1/6/97] This case will apparently be about enforcing the requirement that promoters of medical remedies follow the procedures outlined by law. Enforcing regulatory standards doesn't have the emotional appeal that treating desperate cancer patients does, but common to all quackery is the failure to follow procedure, and it is on this level that law enforcement is most effective. Burzynski created his own problems when he not only failed to follow procedure, but violated agreements he made to stop his illicit activities. This case will be the cause celebre for some time to come.

HERBAL LAXATIVE PRODUCTS MUST CARRY WARNING LABEL IN CALIFORNIA

Beginning January 1, 1997, herbal products that have a laxative effect must carry a warning label. Herbs covered by the regulation include senna (often listed as *Cassia angustifolia*), aloe, buckthorn, cascara, frangula, and rhubarb. Any food product containing any of these herbs must have the following statement conspicuously displayed on its label:

NOTICE: This product contains (name of ingredient and common name if different). Read and follow directions carefully. *Do not use if you have or develop diarrhea, loose stools or abdominal pain.* Consult your physician if you have frequent diarrhea. If you are pregnant, nursing, taking medication, or have a medical condition, consult your physician before using this product.

The California Department of Health Services adopted the regulation after receiving complaints from consumers that some first time users of senna developed abdominal pain and diarrhea and some regular users developed significant health problems from low levels of potassium in their blood. [News Release, California Dept of Health Services, 11/20/96]. We urge members to see what they can do about getting their state health departments to adopt similar requirements.

THERAPEUTIC TOUCH

Linda Rosa, RN, Coordinator of NCAHF's Task Force on Questionable Nursing Practices authored a article "Therapeutic Touch: reach out and dupe someone?" that appeared in *Priorities*, 1996;8(3):20-3. Its style makes it useful for public education.

The 1996 Newsletter Index will be included with the March/April mailing.

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.

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