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## The Secretary's Conference for Youth on Drinking and Driving: Special Report

KATE CALLEN

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### SYNOPSIS

*Part of a Department of Health and Human Services initiative against teenage alcohol abuse, a national Conference for Youth on Drinking and Driving—held March 26–28, 1983 in Chevy Chase, Md.—brought together more than 300 high school student delegates and school superintendents from every State and Territory.*

*The conference spotlighted successful programs that students around the country have undertaken to promote sober driving—programs that incorporate these key principles: (a) they rely almost solely on peer leadership “by students for students”; (b) they employ a “holistic” approach to health promotion, emphasizing self-esteem and alternatives to alcohol and drug abuse; and (c) they use the resources of the whole community. Working with student leaders of these model programs, conference delegates devised ways to launch similar programs in their own schools and communities and to enlist help from parents, teachers, lawmakers, the media, and business and civic groups.*

*The Department of Health and Human Services plans to hold similar conferences annually, to mobilize future generations of students against drunk driving.*

**T**HE ONLY AGE GROUP in the United States whose death rate has climbed rather than fallen in the last decade is Americans 15 to 24 years (1). The leading cause of death among these young Americans is alcohol-related traffic accidents. In 1981, such accidents involving young drivers resulted in the deaths of nearly 10,000 persons (2).

Alarmed by these data, former Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Richard Schweiker decided in October 1982 that a major

thrust of a new departmental initiative against teenage alcohol abuse would be a conference for youth on drinking and driving. The conference would spotlight the work of students around the country who promote sober driving in their communities.

Five months later, Schweiker joined his successor, HHS Secretary Margaret Heckler, Transportation Secretary Elizabeth Dole, Education Secretary Terrel Bell, and Representative Michael Barnes (Md.) in welcoming 324 U.S. teenagers to the Secretary's



*Students were welcomed to the conference by HHS Secretary Margaret Heckler (photo at left) and former HHS Secretary Richard Schweiker, Transportation Secretary Elizabeth Dole, and Education Secretary Terrel Bell*

Conference for Youth on Drinking and Driving, held Mar. 26–28, 1983, at the National 4-H Center in Chevy Chase, Md.

Throughout the conference, student delegates and school superintendents (five student delegates and one superintendent from each State and Territory) learned how to mount effective sober-driving campaigns based on “positive peer pressure”: using young people to persuade other young people that drinking and driving is neither fun nor “cool” but can be deadly.

The student delegates, selected on the basis of previous involvement in school and community activities, met with the teenage leaders of eight successful “Don’t drink and drive” programs in high schools and communities around the country. Working with these leaders, the delegates devised ways to launch similar programs in their own schools and to enlist help from adults—parents, teachers, lawmakers, the media, and business and civic groups—in arousing their communities.

In a series of intensive “how to” workshops, the delegates became familiar with education and prevention techniques they can use in developing anti-drunk-driving campaigns back home. They discovered that all eight school-based model programs, as described by the teenagers who developed and ran them, incorporate certain key principles: (a) they rely almost solely on peer leadership “by students for students”; (b) they employ a “holistic” approach to health promotion that emphasizes self-esteem and alternatives to alcohol and drug abuse; and (c) they use resources of the entire community, especially expertise and support drawn from the private sector.

## Model Programs

The eight model programs represented at the conference were:

**Operation: Snowball** (Illinois). The name “Operation: Snowball” is derived from the project’s formal credo that “as individuals, our influence is likely to be as light and fragile as a single snowflake; collectively, we have the force and power of an avalanche.”

This alcohol and drug abuse prevention program, begun in 1977 by five teenagers who wanted to share their leadership training experience with other students, operates via franchised chapters organized in a State-regional-local network. Teams of trained teen staff and teen participants pledge to carry out the program’s credo: “to seek out youth who are insecure, alienated . . . or in conflict with self or society . . . to establish a community of caring.”

Training of the young peer counselors is coordinated by the Illinois Alcoholism and Drug Dependence Association, which uses its own training manual, “Process and Resource Guide to Operation: Snowball.” Many youth leaders receive training at the Illinois Teen Institute, which was the seedbed for Operation: Snowball.

As alternatives to alcohol and drug abuse, the program offers young people activities that also help further its mission—for example, fundraising ventures, weekend retreats, publication of chapter newsletters, and community workshops. Parents, educators, business leaders, and other adults provide integral support.

(For further information, contact Gary Green, Sangamon-Menard Alcoholism and Drugs Council, 723 S. Fifth, Springfield, Ill. 62704.)

**The Control Factor** (Minnesota). Founded on the philosophy that “young people can have a positive impact on other young people’s behavior,” this alcohol safety education program uses trained student instructors to help their classmates make informed decisions about drinking and driving. The young instructors, all high school juniors who are licensed to drive and have been recommended by school officials, are trained at 10 sites throughout the State. They become acquainted with alcohol’s role in society and the risks of driving while drunk, and they learn how to launch peer education programs in their home school districts. Graduates of the program receive a followup newsletter on a regular basis.

Sponsored by local school districts throughout Minnesota, The Control Factor will reach an estimated 15,000 students in fiscal year 1984, at an approximate cost of \$6 per student. Evaluations of the project have found that it has a positive impact on young drivers' attitudes toward drinking and driving, and participants have overwhelmingly endorsed the program's content and methodology.

(For further information, contact John Palmer, Whitney House, St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud, Minn. 56301.)

#### **Students Against Drunk Driving (Massachusetts).**

SADD, a peer-run community program to deter drunk driving by teenagers and others, now has several hundred chapters in 22 States, and reaches 3 million students. Its slogan is: "If we can dream it—it can be done," and its operating philosophy is that young people will be better able to avoid drunk-driving situations if they are fully aware of the dangers and if they have planned ways to cope with such circumstances. To achieve that end, SADD employs:

—a 15-session classroom curriculum on drinking and driving;

—a parent-teenager contract in which (a) students pledge to call their parents any time they need transportation because they or their friends have drunk too much to drive, and (b) parents agree to provide such transportation without questions or arguments and to seek safe transportation themselves when faced with drunk driving; and

—seminars for seniors on dealing with problems that often face new college students.



Secretary Heckler, a former Congresswoman from Massachusetts, greets student delegates from the State she represented

*HHS Secretary Margaret Heckler:  
'Researchers tell us peer group pressure often is what leads young people to drink . . . By turning that peer pressure around into a warning from one student to another about the danger of drunk driving, you can save thousands of young lives from being snuffed out each year.'*

Local SADD chapters have 5 student officers (including 1 in charge of public relations) and a working force of 50 student members. With assistance from teachers and other adults, they conduct peer counseling and sponsor local education campaigns (for example, junior prom alcohol awareness programs).

Area SADD promotion days help engender community interest, and proclamations for statewide SADD weeks have been signed by the Governors of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Indiana, with more such proclamations to follow.

(For further information, contact Robert Anastas, 66 Diana Dr., Marlboro, Mass. 01752.)

**Project Graduation (Maine).** This campaign confronts the fact that many seniors view alcohol and drugs as part of the commencement celebration ritual. Its goal is a fatality-free graduation period achieved by providing students with stimulating and enjoyable alternatives to alcohol or drug use.

The project uses two strategies to promote sober celebrations: staging "chemical free" graduation parties for seniors and their guests and generating anti-drunk-driving media campaigns from April through June. In 1982, 36 school districts throughout Maine reported successful parties in such settings as cruise boats, dance halls, and State parks and campgrounds. In support of the project, 4 television stations and 30 radio stations aired public service announcements, and local newspapers contributed a vast amount of enthusiastic coverage.

The project's success is evident from local police reports. In one region, alcohol-related deaths in the 2 weeks before graduation fell from seven in 1979 to none in 1980. In another county, the Sheriff's office reported, "Graduation night was quieter than an ordinary night of routine patrol."

(For further information, contact Corrine Allen, Division of Alcohol and Drug Education Service, Stevens School Complex, State House Station 57, Augusta, Maine 04333.)

**The Ohio Teen Institute.** The first institute of its kind in the nation, OTI was launched in 1965 to help young people have a positive influence on the attitudes toward alcohol and drugs held by their peers and their communities.

Each summer, the institute provides residential training in alcohol and drug abuse prevention to 500 teenagers selected with the help of Ohio's 12 regional councils on alcoholism. In 6 days of intensive training, student participants learn to be assertive and effective in helping others avoid alcohol and drug problems, and they become acquainted with the value of "positive addictions" (for example, running, dance, photography).

That such training successfully prepares students to launch prevention activities in their own school districts is indicated by a 1982 followup survey which showed that 6 months after their OTI training, 72.2 percent of the teenage respondents had worked on a prevention project with other students in their country; 86.3 percent had worked on such a project with a teacher or another adult; and 67.5 percent had worked with a local or regional alcoholism center.

OTI receives support for a full-time director and other funding from the Ohio Department of Health. It is supported also by the Ohio Department of Liquor Control, Ohio Congress of Parents and Teachers, Ohio Department of Highway Safety, Ohio Department of Education, Bureau of Drug Abuse, and local civic, religious, and professional organizations.

(For further information, contact Robert Steele, Teenage Institute for the Prevention of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse, Division of Alcoholism, P.O. Box 118, Columbus, Ohio 43216.)

*Education Secretary Terrel Bell:  
'Of the many problems facing our nation's schools today, none has more potential for the disruption of the vital education processes than the widespread abuse of alcohol and other drugs by our student population.'*

**Peer Resources Education Program (Wisconsin).** PREP, started in 1978 as a training program for high school volunteers, is based on the belief that, with regard to alcohol and drug abuse prevention, teens relate best to each other, understand peer pressure, and are the major source of information for each other.

Each year, the project trains 30 freshman and sophomore volunteers to provide alcohol and drug education in their schools and communities. The training process consists of four phases: orientation to program goals and design, information about available service resources, a weekend workshop on the physiological and psychological effects of alcohol and drug use, and rotating inservice sessions at each of the area high schools.

To reach youngsters before they begin experimentation with alcohol and drugs, educational efforts focus primarily on fifth graders, using a curriculum (called "The Choice Is Mine") that covers myths and facts about alcohol and drug use.

PREP received the 1981 Wisconsin Exemplary Prevention Program Award. It is supported by county funds, the United Way, and various civic groups.

(For further information, contact Brenda Stanislawski, Ozaukee Council on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse, 125 N. Franklin Ave., Port Washington, Wash. 53704.)

**Southern Oregon Drug Awareness (SODA).** This project was prompted by increasing recognition that a "laissez faire" approach to growing alcohol and drug abuse problems will not work.

SODA is open to all interested youth and other community members. Its long-term goals are to increase community awareness of these problems, provide support and guidance to local agencies striving to create a positive environment, and eliminate all area retail sales of drug-related paraphernalia. To stimulate a range of prevention activities, six SODA task force committees—school curriculum, law enforcement, parent education, youth development, community information, and business and industry—undertake projects tailored to their specific areas of interest.

A focal point of the SODA approach to mobilizing youth is a special program, operating under a \$10,000 State grant, to train students in video production, graphics techniques, and other skills needed to develop effective media campaigns. Students also are trained to serve as peer counselors and to collect program statistical data in support of program funding. Other SODA activities include operating a

speakers' bureau, publishing a newsletter, and sponsoring community "fun runs."

(For further information, contact Bonnie Talbert, Medford Senior High School, 1900 N. Keeneway, Medford, Ore. 97501.)

**National Student Safety Program.** A program of the American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association, NSSP is a national resource for students who want to start safety projects in their schools and communities.

The basic NSSP philosophy is that student participation in community projects of social consequence is key to developing a sense of responsibility to other people, and that students have the desire, resourcefulness, and ability to contribute significantly to solving current problems. The program offers a consultant service through which professional educators help schools conduct conferences, workshops, and other safety-oriented ventures. It also features a high school assembly program ("The Price Is High") on drinking and driving that uses a game-show format to give students information and decision-making skills. (NSSP makes materials for "The Price Is High"—including audiovisual equipment—available on a free-loan basis and provides experts to answer questions after presentations.)

NSSP sponsors an annual conference that serves as an information-sharing event for States and communities. This activity and others undertaken by the program are coordinated by the Safety Center at Central Missouri State University.

(For further information, contact Dr. Robert Uhrick, Humphreys 213, Safety Department, Central Missouri State University, Warrensburg, Mo. 64093.)

### Learning the Scope of the Problem

While the student delegates were learning how to launch sober-driving projects for their classmates, they also learned how much their classmates need such efforts. In discussions following opening presentations on the scope of the problem, most students admitted they had never known, or thought much about, the actual threat that driving while drunk poses to themselves and their generation. Upon discovering that drunk driving was the major cause of death among their peers, the teenagers were especially struck by a remark made by Washington State Trooper John Mittman during the opening session. To realize the meaning of the statistic that 1 young person in 10 dies in a drunk-driving crash, he said,

"picture ten of your closest friends—then take one of them away."

"Friday Night Live," an audiovisual montage that is the cornerstone of a highly successful Washington State media campaign aimed at young drivers, was shown early in the conference as dramatic evidence of the toll of drunk driving. The presentation began with colorful scenes of carefree parties accompanied by upbeat rock music—and quickly switched to actual footage of a teenage girl being arrested, fingerprinted, and jailed for driving while intoxicated. It also showed poignant interviews with a young man who had caused an accident while drunk and his girlfriend, who had lost an eye and had suffered facial wounds in the accident.

The students also heard from Don Newcombe, former Brooklyn Dodgers pitcher, who described his life as a recovering alcoholic—an existence replete with struggles for himself, his family, and his friends.

In what may have been the most dramatic presentation at the conference, the young delegates were put on notice by 19-year-old Kevin Tunnell that a drunk-driving tragedy could indeed happen to them. Tunnell spoke from experience. After drinking too much champagne on New Year's Eve of his senior year in high school, he killed another young driver in a head-on auto collision.

The subsequent agony that he, his family, and his friends suffered "wasn't worth being the coolest guy in Fairfax [Va.] High School," he said. As part of his sentence for a manslaughter conviction, the court ordered him to recount his experience publicly for a full year before assemblies of teenagers and young



Davis Taylor (right) who was honored for his contribution in stimulating private-sector support for the meeting, visits a pre-conference student art exhibit with former Brooklyn Dodgers pitcher Don Newcombe and Secretary Heckler

children. "The adults have had their turn to warn us," Tunnell told the delegates, "but young people need to hear it from each other. My year of speaking out about drinking and driving is up. Now the ball's in your court."

The delegates also learned at the very start of the conference from three Cabinet members and a Congressman that the U.S. Government is solidly behind their efforts. Secretaries Heckler, Dole, and Bell pledged their Departments' resources to pursuit of a common goal: eliminating (not just reducing) alcohol-related traffic deaths and injuries, especially among youth, through public education efforts. Congressman Barnes (who cosponsored a law, passed in October 1982, providing Federal incentive grants to States that take recommended steps to combat drunk driving) assured the students that their legislators are ready to take action.

In her welcome to the students, Heckler said: "Researchers tell us peer group pressure often is what leads young people to drink in the first place. By turning that peer pressure around into a warning from one student to another about the danger of drunk driving, we can save thousands of young lives from being snuffed out every year."

### Planning for Action Back Home

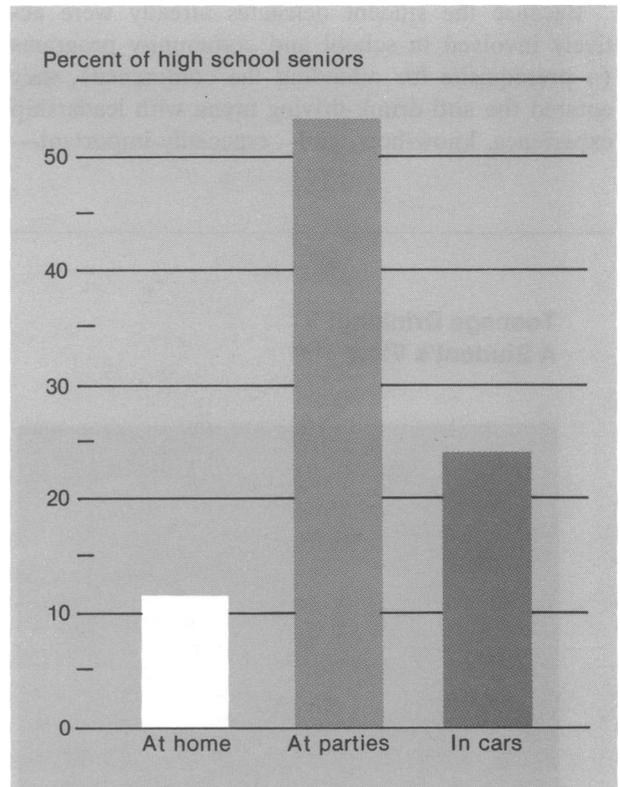
Armed with the facts and rallied by the authorities, the student delegates met in small groups halfway through the conference to start "brainstorming" plans for their own projects. They seemed especially interested in statistical charts that showed how the number of accidents in their own States compared with numbers for the rest of the nation. They also were fascinated by charts that showed the locations of teenage drinking (fig. 1) and the incidence of alcohol-related accidents by age groups, times of day, days of the week (fig. 2), and so on. Many agreed that the information would prove useful in developing education programs back home.

One student presenter raised the point in his work-group that some people in the delegates' communities might question whether a "Don't drink and drive" campaign implicitly condones students' drinking and not driving. After much discussion, the group decided that the best way to avoid such confusion is to emphasize that their overriding concern is saving young lives.

To make the greatest impact on teenagers, education programs should emphasize that alcohol use is a health issue that affects the body's capacity for fitness and activity, several delegates commented. After attending the presentations about the model projects,

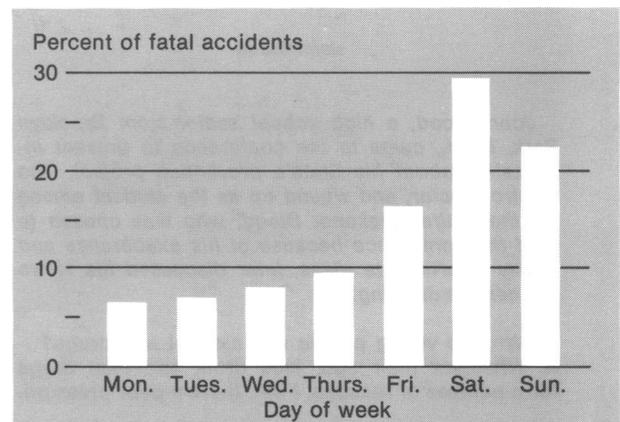
most delegates selected several elements of each that they felt would be most relevant for use in developing their own projects. For example, many students liked the performing-arts approach to alcohol education embodied in "Kegger," a musical comedy staged on the last night of the conference by the Omaha Magic Theater.

Figure 1. Where teenagers drink



SOURCE: Developed by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, on the basis of data from the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Figure 2. Fatal accidents among drinking drivers 16-19 years of age, by day of week, 1979-81



SOURCE: Developed by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, on the basis of data from the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

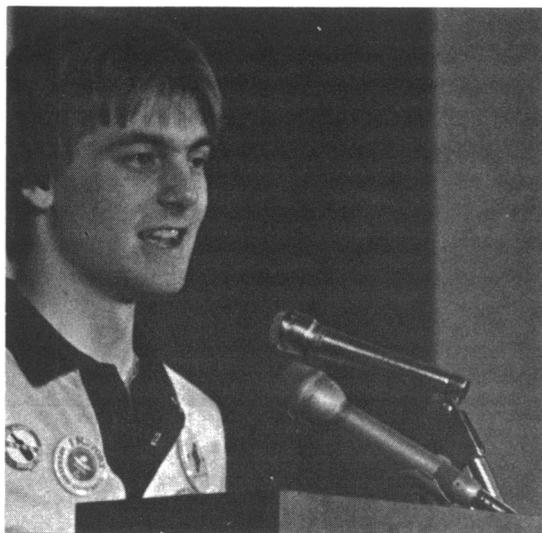
Supported by the National Endowment for the Arts and several Nebraska State agencies, "Kegger" is an hour-long original play—set to modern music and performed by young people—that explores thoughts and decisions about drinking. (The nationally acclaimed program is available as a script-and-score package or in video form from the Omaha Magic Theatre, 417 Farnam St., Omaha, Nebr. 68102.)

Because the student delegates already were actively involved in school and community programs (a prerequisite for attending the conference), they entered the anti-drunk-driving arena with leadership experience, know-how, and—especially important—

local contacts. Most felt that their primary task back home would be to tap existing resources and networks for help in launching comprehensive campaigns against drinking and driving. They recognized the value of conducting local needs-assessment activities to determine the scope of the problem in their areas and help demonstrate the need for action.

All delegates received lists of State and local resource groups to contact for assistance. They also learned about Federal funds available to their States for prevention of drunk driving and other alcohol problems. (These funds include incentive grants from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration for States with programs to reduce alcohol-

### Teenage Drinking: A Student's View



John Blood

*John Blood, a high school senior from Brooklyn Park, Minn., came to the conference to present information about his State's prevention project, *The Control Factor*, and wound up as the student emcee for the entire weekend. Blood, who was chosen to lead the conference because of his exuberance and ability to articulate ideas, later discussed his views on teenage drinking.*

**Q.** Why do young people use alcohol and drugs?  
**A.** Whatever their age, kids drink and take drugs for a number of reasons. First, there's peer pressure.

The hardest to resist is not direct pressuring, but subtle and constant nudging: "Aw, come on, everybody does it."

Another reason kids drink is because they don't have a good self-image. This goes along with peer pressure: students feel they have to do something everybody else does to get acceptance. To be "someone," teens may think they have to "party" with alcohol or drugs, because the kids who are "partying" usually are the most vocal about what they do, and so they become the "in" group.

Adolescence is a confusing time. You start to ask yourself, Who am I really? And finding out who you are often means experimentation with new experiences.

**Q.** Can a teenager who speaks out against drinking and driving still be considered "someone"?

**A.** Yes. Many kids who give in to peer pressure are just waiting for some other kid to say, "No, let's not do this." But it has to be someone in your own group. You can't approach kids as an outsider—you must be "one of the gang." Most people will talk and listen more to a friend than a stranger.

To speak out against peer pressure, it only takes one kid in the group to say, "I'm just like everybody else, I like to party too—but let's set limits." Or "I don't feel like drinking beer. Why don't we go out for a pizza instead?"

**Q.** What about the people back home—do you think the prevention idea will be picked up at the local level?

**A.** Definitely. All the delegates and their adult advisors will be working on anti-drunk-driving programs over the summer to have them ready for the new school year in September. Getting to go to a national conference in Washington and getting word to the outside world through national media coverage on TV, radio, and the newspapers gave us a real boost. A lot of the kids I talked to said they were raring to go with what they learned when they get back home.

related accidents and Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Services Block Grants that require States to set aside funds for alcoholism prevention programs.)

The students were encouraged by these and other Federal efforts to alert the country to the dangers of drunk driving. As one teenager put it, "National recognition like this will make it easier for us to get our communities moving."

The conference closed on an exuberant note as Dr. William Mayer, administrator of the Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration and acting director of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, awarded certificates of achievement to the students who had presented their eight model projects throughout the weekend.

"Your presence here places you among the new leaders of the country," Mayer told the students. "From what I've seen this weekend, the future of our nation is in good hands."

Repeating an earlier pledge by Secretary Heckler, Mayer announced that the Department of Health and Human Services intends to hold similar conferences annually to mobilize future generations of students against drunk driving.

### Private Sector Support

Nearly \$125,000 in private contributions from 10 organizations and foundations helped sponsor this year's conference. Coordinators were James Kemper, Jr., chairman of the board of Kemper Insurance Group, and Davis Taylor, member of the Board of

*Transportation Secretary Elizabeth Dole: 'Drunk driving is a form of homicide—and the young generation suffers from it disproportionately. Your generation also is stigmatized by drunk drivers. We don't hear much about responsible teenage drivers.'*

Directors, Boston Globe Foundation, Inc. Both men received the Secretary's Volunteer Award for stimulating private sector support of the conference.

Other contributors included: Allstate Foundation; Dow Jones and Company, Inc.; GEICO Philanthropic Foundation; Philip L. Graham Fund (The Washington Post); Knight-Ridder Newspapers, Inc.; Lee Enterprises; Liberty Mutual Insurance Company; and The New York Times.

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## The Life Expectancy of Nonsmoking Men and Women

G. H. MILLER, PhD  
DEAN R. GERSTEIN, PhD

Dr. Miller is director of Studies on Smoking (SOS), a research program in Edinboro, Pa., that includes smoking cessation clinics. Dr. Gerstein is study director, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, National Research Council, Washington, D.C. Parts of the work reported here were supported by a grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (Contract No. 271-76-331) to the Committee on Substance Abuse and Habitual Behavior, National Research Council, and by the Erie Chapter of the American Cancer Society, the Northwestern Pennsylvania

Lung Association, and the Heart Association of Erie County.

The article is based on a presentation by Dr. Miller to the 5th World Conference on Smoking and Health, in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, July 14, 1983. Tearsheet requests to Dr. G. H. Miller, Director, Studies on Smoking (SOS), 711-2 Circleville Rd., State College, Pa. 16801.

### SYNOPSIS

*The pronounced difference in life expectancy between men and women in the United States and other industrialized countries has been attributed to a variety of causes, among them, differential rates of cigarette smoking. A study was undertaken to eliminate the confounding factors of imprecision in the taking of smoking histories and exaggeration of*