

State / National

Doctors say it is needed for consumer protection

New Texas Medical Practices Act draws criticism

United Press International
AUSTIN — Ministers who give

a glass of water to a dying man, or a health food store owner who suggests use of organic food as treatment for allergies, could be sent to prison under terms of a Medical Practices Act backed by the Texas Medical Association, a group called the Health Freedom Council said Tuesday.

Leaders of the group — including a doctor who ran afoul in the TMA for his use of acupuncture and laetrile, a Universalist minister and a Tyler man who says he is a writer and researcher — said the proposal pending in the Legislature would turn what already is a medical monopoly by the TMA into a medical dictatorship.

Dr. Dan Dotson of Graham, Dr. Peter Wilkinson of Dallas, a minister, and Gene Mitchell of Tyler said the new Medical Practices Act makes prosecution easier and punishment stronger for persons accused of practicing medicine without a license.

Greg Hooser, legislative counsel for the Texas Medical Association, said the claims by the Health Freedom Council "simply aren't true."

"This group seems to be either confused or misinformed about both the proposed and existing

medical practice act," he said. The definition of "practice of medicine," he said, is the same in the proposed new law as in the present law, and he brushed aside claims by the Health Freedom Council that doctors should be free to experiment with new forms of treatment such as laetrile, acupunct

puncture, color therapy, and use of DMSO.

"Complete deregulation of medical practice in Texas would put the state back to the pre-1907 era when consumers had little protection from charlatans, quacks, and other self-proclaimed healers," Hooser said.

Under the Texas Sunset Act, a new Medical Practices Act must be passed this session to keep the State Board of Medical Examiners in operation.

Mitchell said Tuesday the Health Freedom Council now has only about a dozen leaders attending its meetings, but said he ex-

pects the group to attract thousands of Texans once known.

"Some of the people involved in this were involved in laetrile but this is a much broader plea. We're interested in better health care at lower cost," he said.

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Madam files for council seat

United Press International
SAN ANTONIO — Madam Theresa Brown, saying she would use her list of 3,000 brothel clients to find political contributors, declared her candidacy Tuesday for a city council seat.

Brown, who pleaded nolo contendere last month to charges of aggravated promotion of prostitution, said her effort to unseat an incumbent Democrat was undertaken "with the most serious deliberation and concern."

"People run for the city council because of the special vested interest behind them, because of their own egos, and because of their sinister narrow attitude," Brown said. "None of these will impel me."

During a news conference, Brown displayed the 3,000-name card file of brothel clients, which she had compiled over 16 years. She said the two-drawer file was returned to her Tuesday by an attorney for El Pueblo, a bilingual monthly newspaper.

El Pueblo last month published only 19 of the 3,000 names on the

list, despite initial promises that all client names would be published. Most people named by El Pueblo have denied any association with Brown or her brothel.

"I have obtained possession of that list and intend to have the city's largest bonfire," she said. "All 3,000 (clients) and all candidates and all people are going to be invited to attend."

She said the El Pueblo attorney

voluntarily returned the trick list. "It's going into my attorney's vault for now," she said, adding that she planned to seek campaign contributions of \$1,000 each from her friends on the list.

A Bexar County judge sentenced Brown to five years probation after she pleaded no contest to the prostitution-related charges. She has asked for a rehearing on

the plea, saying she entered plea under the advice of a family attorney.

Bexar County District Judge James Barlow, who sentenced madam, said Monday that Brown would be allowed to run for office under terms of her probation as long as she refrains from "associating with seedy characters."

Houston, Miami hit hard by meningitis outbreaks

United Press International
ATLANTA — Outbreaks of meningitis were almost twice as numerous in the United States during the first two months of 1981 as in the same period last year, federal health officials say.

Officials at the national Centers for Disease Control said Monday they were baffled by the upsurge in meningococcal meningitis cases, which may set a 26-year record.

At least two major cities — Houston and Miami — have reported epidemics of the sometimes-fatal disease, an inflamma-

tion of the membranes covering the brain and spinal cord. Increases of the disease were noted, however, in all nine regions of the country monitored by the CDC.

Health officials said 780 meningitis cases were reported in the nation through February, compared to 445 a year earlier. Normally, the illness does not peak until summer.

"No one really understands why," said Dr. Walter F. Schlech of the CDC's special pathogens division. "It may be related to a preceding viral infection. There was quite a bit of influenza this winter.

That's one of the things we're looking at."

Both Houston and Miami flu epidemics that started just before the meningitis struck.

Harris County (Houston) had 43 confirmed cases of meningitis this year, resulting in 10 deaths. Another death resulted from a suspected case. In Harris County had 30 cases of disease.

In Dade County (Miami), people contracted meningitis a year and nine died.

Schlech said epidemics in cities have slackened off in the couple of weeks.

States reporting more than cases were California, Texas, Florida. Connecticut reported cases compared to six in 1980.

Meningococcal meningitis usually begins suddenly with fever, severe headache, stiffness and pain in the neck, back and shoulders. Often there is vomiting. A skin rash of bright red spots frequently appears, sometimes resembling bruises.

Before antibiotics, meningitis killed 50 percent of its victims. The death rate now is about 20 percent.

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