

Friday, February 8, 1991

The Battalion

Health care concerns professor State, Quaker Oats settle without fines

By Mack Harrison
Of The Battalion Staff

Changes in the health care system as well as major scientific advances are only some of the trends in medicine in the near future, says a former dean of Texas A&M's College of Medicine.

Dr. Robert Stone, director of the Center of Health Systems and Technology and dean of the College of Medicine from 1978 to 1987, says the biggest shift will occur in the health care system.

"People not in medicine will have a greater influence," he says.

Stone, a professor of pathology and lab medicine, says the question of health insurance involves access to medical care and is a primary concern in the decade.

The medical community must make medical care possible for everyone, he says.

Private health care insurance, employer and student medical plans and government-funded health programs all must be considered, Stone says.

"It's unlikely we'll have a monolithic system," he says.

Doctors also must deal with medical malpractice suits. Stone says lawsuits increasingly are seen as part of an overall problem in modern society.

Law reform should address the problems of

too many lawyers and large personal injury awards, but medical professionals should not play a central part in the change, he says.

The general public must take greater responsibility for its personal health, Stone says.

Stone also predicts a vaccine and cure for the deadly AIDS virus will be found by the year 2000.

Although doctors are using experimental vaccines now, Stone says he does not expect to see one perfected within the next two years.

Stone says the way doctors follow medical cases will change as well.

New information management techniques will go a long way toward standardizing medical practice and reducing diagnostic errors, he says.

Doctors now have practice parameters they employ in treatment and diagnosis. Stone says these general guidelines leave less probability for uncertainties or errors.

Doctors also can use computers to keep track of the effects of different treatments.

Stone says doctors used to use remedies that had not been proven. For example, pediatricians once recommended tonsillectomies for nearly all children. Stone says today such operations are rare.

He says that during the next 10 years medical science will increase its insight into how the human brain functions.

"The coming years have been called the decade of the brain," Stone says. "We can expect a greatly improved understanding of how the brain works."

He says this comprehension of the brain will result in better educational methods.

Stone says he also expects great headway in the prevention and treatment of depression that can lead to suicide.

Stone says suicide is a large problem in the United States, but new drugs to treat depression can reduce the loss of life.

Stone says advances in genetics will be "breath-taking."

Physicians already are able to treat individuals using the patient's own genetically modified cells. Stone says that in the future doctors will undertake treatments before attempted.

Doctors will be able to diagnose and fix hereditary diseases in infants before birth, Stone says.

"They will perform more and more gene therapy in utero," Stone says.

Scientists also will understand and retard the aging process in coming years, he says.

Drugs and other treatments combined with personal responsibility will improve the lifestyle of older individuals, Stone says. Alcohol, tobacco and diet can cause adverse effects over the years.

"Much of the disabilities associated with aging are actually from misuse," he says.

AUSTIN (AP) — A settlement without fines was reached Thursday in the state's lawsuit against The Quaker Oats Co. for alleged deceptive marketing.

The settlement, or dismissal as Quaker called it, was announced by the Chicago company and Texas Attorney General Dan Morales.

The lawsuit was filed in 1989 in federal court in Dallas. The state alleged that Quaker Oats had conducted a national advertising campaign that claimed eating Quaker Oatmeal could reduce cholesterol levels and risk of heart disease, Morales said.

The suit, filed after months of un-

successful negotiations, contended that Quaker violated state and federal law by making a disease-reduction claim without approval of the Federal Drug Administration, Morales said.

The state also asserted that there is insufficient scientific evidence that oatmeal does, in fact, reduce the risk of heart disease, he said.

Quaker senior Vice President Luther McKinney said, "All of our ads referring to health benefits from eating Quaker Oats and Quaker Oat Bran were substantiated by reliable, scientific research and passed a year-long review by the Federal Trade Commission."

In Advance

Chinese celebrations begin with New Year

Celebrations for Chinese New Year will explode on Texas A&M's campus Saturday with special exhibits and performances in the MSC.

The Chinese Student Association has planned many activities to introduce one of China's most important festivals to A&M students. According to the Chinese lunar calendar, Feb. 15 is the Chinese holiday.

New Year's activities begin at 7:30 p.m. Saturday in 201 MSC

with a Chinese New Year show, followed by a short film recounting the holiday's history. A band also will provide musical entertainment.

Other programs include performances of Chinese music and drama and a Chinese Fighting Arts demonstration.

The association also has planned a traditional Chinese dinner and cultural exhibit at 5:30 p.m. Saturday in 226 MSC.

Miss TAMU crowning scheduled for Saturday

Twelve Texas A&M women will vie for the Miss Texas A&M University crown at 7 p.m. Saturday in Rudder Auditorium.

The student-run event is sponsored by the MSC. The three-hour program will culminate with the crowning of one of 12 previously selected contestants.

Contestants will be judged Saturday on sportswear, talent, interview

and evening gown. Miss Texas A&M is awarded a \$1,500 scholarship and runners-up will receive \$1,000, \$600, \$400 and \$300 scholarships, respectively.

The evenings' entertainment includes performances by the Aggie Wranglers dance group, 1990 Miss Texas A&M Rhonda Jo Horn and vocalist Karen Jackson, Miss 1990 Black and Gold.

Communications technology Advances aid rural economies

AUSTIN (AP) — New communications technology can help revitalize rural economies, the chairman of the Federal Communications Commission said.

FCC chief Alfred Sikes, in a speech Thursday at the University of Texas, said rural America boasts some of the best examples of new businesses relying on such advances.

"An array of high-speed data links, toll-free 800 numbers and computerized management systems that communications companies are now delivering are having a positive impact on economic development goals," Sikes said.

"And, given the decline in many parts of rural America, these new opportunities are especially exciting," he said.

Sikes pointed to the Superior Livestock Company, based in Fort Worth and Amarillo, and its satellite-based TV auction system.

"Cattle are videotaped on the ranch, the tapes are then edited together, and the program is relayed to cable television subscribers nationwide via the WestStar 5 satellite, with buyers placing their orders using an 800 number," he said in prepared remarks.

"It's like the Home Shopping Net-

work, only for ranchers and prize cattle," he said. "Since the service was inaugurated, incidentally, Superior's sales reportedly have more than doubled to 800,000 head last year."

Sikes said similar communications advances allowed Mobil Oil to relocate credit card operations to Lenexa, Kan., population 18,000. He said 4,000 jobs were created in Dodgeville and Cross Plains, Wis., when the Land's End mail order company moved its headquarters from Chicago.

"By virtue of today's advanced communications, Wal-Mart, America's largest retailer ... has been able to maintain its corporate headquarters in Bentonville, Ark.," he said.



Sikes

Two killed in explosion

NEEDVILLE (AP) — A series of explosions rocked a petroleum storage yard Thursday, killing at least two people and seriously injuring a third, authorities said.

David Wells, a spokesman for the Department of Public Safety, said crews at a vacuum truck were unloading a crude oil tank when the blast and fires occurred.

Wells said three or four tanks could be involved in the accident, which occurred about 11 a.m., one mile east of the San Bernard River.

Smoke from the fire could be seen as far as 25 miles away, Wells said.

The fire was in a rural area of Fort Bend County, about 45 miles southwest of Houston.

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