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Bow-Lingual

Continued from page 5A

language," said Dr. Bonnie Beaver, professor of small animal medicine and surgery at Texas A&M.

Beaver said she does not believe that the Bow-Lingual device is accurate in its translation of dog barks.

"It probably gets into the general emotional framework, but putting words to the bark is strictly anthropomorphic," Beaver said. "The phrases I have seen associated with the device would not be considered appropriate 'dog translations.'"

Keith Wyly, a freshman civil engineering major, agrees with Beaver's analysis of Bow-Lingual.

"I think that the translator is a clever idea, but is probably not accurate," Wyly said. "(Although) it is a good gimmick to keep kids entertained."

Still, other people remain optimistic about the accuracy of the new dog-translating device.

"I am not 100 percent convinced (that Bow-Lingual is accurate), but I think that there is a strong possibility," Etchison

said. "Technology advanced now that it would shock me."

The Bow-Lingual Translator may offer insight into the thoughts humans' canine friends or, skeptics concur, the thought dogs still remain a mystery. People will never truly be able to figure out exactly what a dog's bark means.

Anti-tobacco program results in decreased incidents of smoking

By Paul Recer
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — In 17 states that participated in a \$128 million government program to discourage tobacco, the prevalence of smoking dropped nearly a percentage point faster than in the rest of the country, a study found.

If the anti-tobacco program was used in all states and the District of Columbia it could reduce the number of smokers by about 278,700, said Frances A. Stillman, the first author of the study appearing Wednesday in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute.

The study evaluated the effect of an eight-year demonstration project called American Stop Smoking Intervention Study, or ASSIST, that was sponsored by NCI.

The anti-smoking project trained local advocacy groups to lobby for passage of higher cigarette excise taxes and to promote regulations for smoke-free environments. The program also mounted a public relations effort to counter an estimated \$47 billion spent by industry to market tobacco products during the study period and included efforts to limit underage access to tobacco.

States included in the study were Colorado, Indiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North

Carolina, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin.

At \$128 million, the program spent about \$1,200 for each smoker who kicked the habit. Elizabeth A. Gillian, a University of California, San Diego, researcher and a co-author of the study, called that cost "a real bargain."

"Most smoking cessation programs will spend that (for each smoker)," said Gillian. "That's just for a few hours of a counselor's time. When you think about what you save in health care costs, \$1,200 is a real bargain."

Studies by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggest that cigarette smoking is responsible for more than 440,000 deaths a year in the United States. Smoking has been linked to heart disease, emphysema and other respiratory system diseases, stroke and a number of different types of cancer.

To evaluate the impact of ASSIST, researchers used industry cigarette sales figures and tobacco use surveys that showed that smoking decreased nationally by 2.41 percentage points during the eight-year period.

In the 17 states where the ASSIST program was in action, the percentage of smokers dropped by 3.02 percentage points during the eight years, compared to a decline of only 2.11 percentage points in the other 33 states and the District of Columbia.

During the eight years of the ASSIST program, smoking among all the population dropped from 24.67 percent to 22.26 percent; in the 17 states, it dropped from 25.19 percent to 22.17 percent. In the rest of the country, it declined from 24.41 percent to 22.30 percent.

Stillman said the 17 states include some that already had strong anti-smoking programs and some that didn't. She said the results showed that the program can reduce smoking prevalence and enormous health and economic burden of smoking if they put in place proven programs and policies.

The impact of the program may have been blunted somewhat by the tobacco industry. Stillman said the Federal Trade Commission estimates that the industry spent about \$47 billion promoting tobacco products nationally during the period of the ASSIST program.

Jennifer Golisch, a spokeswoman for Philip Morris USA, Inc., the nation's largest tobacco company, would not comment on the study. She said her company now spends \$100 million a year to encourage underage smoking. Starting in 1999, she said, the company reduced cigarette ads in magazines by 50 percent. Golisch said Philip Morris also supports regulation of smoking in public places and favors regulation of the tobacco industry by the Food and Drug Administration.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Company fails to pay cancer claimants

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A Nebraska company has agreed to pay \$20 million to settle claims that it sold cancer insurance to people nationwide but paid only a fraction of the benefits when they got sick.

Central States Health and Life Co. of Omaha will pay \$7.5 million to about 1,240 people who were denied coverage and \$2.5 million to attorneys. The remainder will go into a fund to pay future medical expenses for the 1,400 people who filed claims or any of more than 18,000 other people nationwide who bought the policies but have not developed cancer.

The settlement was approved Tuesday by U.S. District Judge Karen E. Schreier in Sioux Falls, S.D., where one of the original complaints was filed.

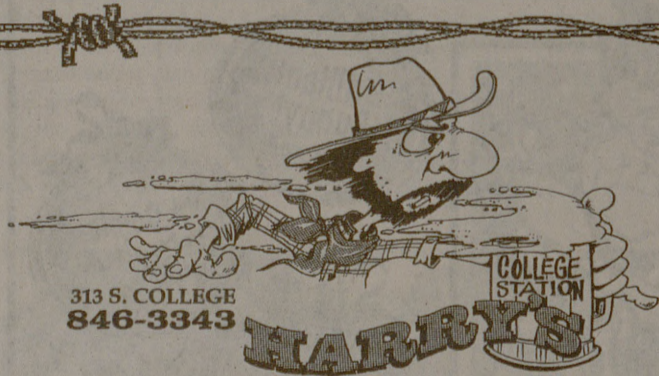
Central States sold policies guaranteed renewable for life that said the company would pay for chemotherapy, radiation

treatments, immunotherapy surgery and some travel expenses needed to get treatment, the lawsuit said.

Policyholders who developed cancer found that Central States used such a narrow interpretation of the policy language that most of their bills were excluded, said attorney Michael Abourezk of Rapid City, S.D. The company refused to pay for services associated with radiation treatment, such as dose calculations and the use of lead blocks to protect cancerous tissue from radiation, he said.

"They have to calculate exactly how they are going to shield the radiation — you can't just shove them in front of a machine and flip the switch," Abourezk said. "But the company won't only pay for shoving them in front of the machine and flipping the switch."

Richard Kizer, chairman of Central States, said Wednesday that the policies were sold as supplemental insurance and that the company paid up to 90 percent of the treatment costs in some cases.



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