



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
TWIN CITIES

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*Coner - Cloud*

August 13, 1981

Daniel T. Cloud, M.D.  
American Medical Association  
535 North Dearborn Street  
Chicago, IL. 60610

Dear Dr. Cloud:

This is in response to your form letter inviting physicians to join the AMA. I was a member for thirty years. But it is just such messages as yours, with their assumptions that everyone shares your political party and ideas, assumptions bordering on the arrogant and surely thoughtless, that have led me and a number of others to leave the AMA. The AMA in no way represents me, or, for that matter, a balanced view of the world. From an organization that was once led by the great leaders in medicine, it is now led by political physicians, apparently all of one persuasion. One can certainly share some of the AMA views without it being assumed that there is the identical perception of problems and issues. The continued distortion in official AMA viewpoints on issues of the public health, on nutrition and health, on tobacco and health, on the environment and health, are, in my view, singularly unbalanced, poorly constructed and unscientific. They represent only the "see your doctor" philosophy. Such an approach works when a disease is relatively uncommon, emergent, primarily intrinsic, and requires conventional therapy. This approach breaks down badly for diseases which are common, which have large socio-cultural determinants, and in which the approach is a public health one rather than an individual patient-to-physician relationship. This simple concept is hardly grasped in the narrow scientific and social views of the AMA.

As you see, I am simply taking your letter as a trigger to express my concern, and my opinion, that until the AMA is able to accept divergent views, to address larger issues with more of a public health view rather than solely an individual medical view, until it can entice, by its soundness, distinguished medical leaders and investigators in addition to those delivering private care, it has little hope ever again to be a truly national professional association.

Sincerely,

Henry Blackburn, M.D.  
Professor and Director  
Professor of Medicine

bcc: Jeremiah Stamler, M.D.  
James Schoenberger, M.D.  
Richard Schweiker, Secretary,  
Dept. of Health and Human Services

HB:jml

cc: Richard Jones, Scientific Affairs, American Medical Association



AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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PRESIDENT

DANIEL T. CLOUD, M.D.

September 11, 1981

Henry Blackburn, M. D.  
Director, Laboratory of Physiological Hygiene  
School of Public Health  
University of Minnesota  
Stadium Gate 27  
611 Beacon Street S.E.  
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Dear Doctor Blackburn:

Thank you for your letter of August 13, 1981.

As you know from your 30 years of AMA membership, the policies of the Association are constantly evolving in response to developments in medicine and society. Unlike some organizations, our policies are forged democratically at conventions of AMA's House of Delegates. If some policies that result from the process are not as forceful or effective as they might be, we have an organization that can be responsive to persuasive scientific arguments in favor of change. The mechanisms are there; I have seen them work, and I suspect that you have too.

I am sure that Dick Jones can provide you with the specifics of existing AMA policies in the areas of most interest to you. After you have reviewed them, I would be pleased to hear from you again. A representative organization like AMA can only work for its members when it hears from its members on the issues that concern them. However, it must be recognized that in the AMA, the relative importance and "official" views on issues are determined by consensus in the House of Delegates. Few members will ever find themselves agreeing with AMA on every issue and priority. The profession is too diverse to expect that.

Certainly the AMA cannot afford to lose 30 year members. I want you back with us. That you took the time to write suggests that you haven't lost interest. Please let me help resolve some of your concerns.

Sincerely,

Daniel T. Cloud, M. D.

cc: Richard Jones, M. D.