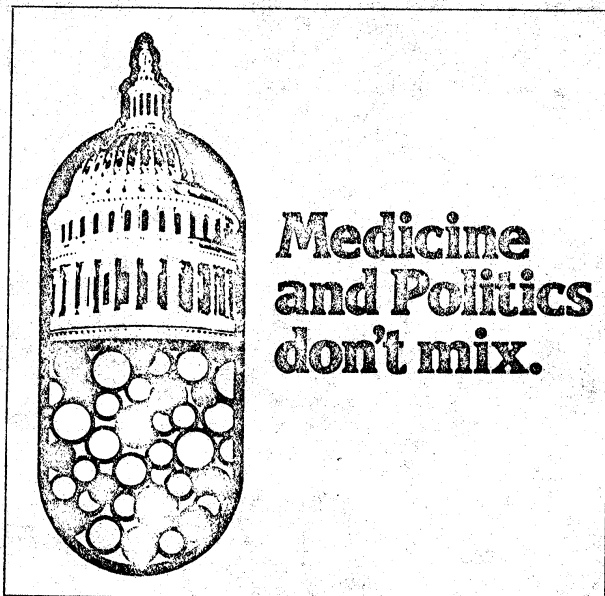


County Medical Societies Campaign to Beat Drug Substitution

by the editors of PRIVATE PRACTICE



Increasing pressure on the Oklahoma State Legislature to repeal Oklahoma's strong anti-substitution law had doctors worried. "When I write a prescription for one of my patients," Dr. Orange Welborn of Ada, Oklahoma, told *PRIVATE PRACTICE*, "I want him to get the exact drug I prescribe — not a cheap generic some bureaucrat in Washington claims is equivalent to the brandname I have used and trust."

But lobbying by labor unions, consumerists, and retired people's groups — using the chimera of reduced prescription drug costs — was getting close to success. Soon, Oklahoma doctors might have their prescriptions changed and generic drugs substituted without their or their patients' knowledge.

So instead of wringing their hands, the Pottawatomie

and Pontotoc County Medical Societies and Pharmacists Associations decided to do something about it. With the help of the Congress of County Medical Societies, they launched a massive media campaign in their Oklahoma counties — using TV, radio, and newspapers — to stop the repeal of the anti-substitution law. So far as *PRIVATE PRACTICE* has been able to discover, this campaign is unique in American medicine. "We know constituent pressure *does* influence legislators as nothing else does," Dr. Welborn said, "and we are mobilizing the voters — our patients — through advertising explaining that drug substitution can hurt their health. Believe me, the results so far show that the politicians listen, and listen very carefully."