

(continued from page S-3) Medical Societies and a wellknown local advertising agency, Adsociates. Out of the meeting grew the indepth TV, radio, and newspaper effort to stop substitution in its tracks.

Working closely with physicians in private practice, Berry Wheeler, president of Adsociates, and his staff, crafted six full-page newspaper advertisements, three TV spots, and two radio spots (see Appendix). During the five weeks, the full-page newspaper ads appeared regularly in the daily newspapers of the two counties, accompanied by good editorial support. The 60-second radio and 30-second TV spots were used sparingly at first, and built to a crescendo during the last week. All told, the advertisements appeared on radio 700 times, on TV 99 times, and in newspapers, 28 times.

Each ad was designed to create interest and action. People were given a local phone number in each county, manned 24-hours a day, seven days a week, to call for information. Everyone who wanted more information was sent a pamphlet, "Why Prescription Drug Substitution is Bad Medicine for Oklahoma," written for lay people by Francis A. Davis, MD, and Gordon Richards, RPh (see Appendix), which contained a card to fill in and send to local representatives. Some people wanted to protest immediately to their legislators, and so cards were sent in their names by the two county medical societies.

As a backup, every doctor's office and pharmacy in the two counties had a large counter card on prominent display, headlined: "Oklahomans, Help Yourselves! Stop Prescription Drug Substitution Before It Becomes Law!" In two pockets at the bottom of the card were the Davis-Richards pamphlets and pre-stamped protest cards.

The last night of the campaign, Saturday, February 21st, two hours of TV time were purchased for a movie — *The Bravos*, starring George Peppard — and the 20 minutes of commercial breaks were used to take phone calls from patients about the issue; a panel of doctors and pharmacists answered their questions, telethon-style.

POLITICS AND MEDICINE DON'T MIX

Since the March issue of *PRIVATE PRACTICE* had to be at the printer before the final results were in, they will be reported in our April issue. But there is enough evidence to support Shawnee's Dr. Leon Combs, who called the effort a "real success." Other county societies in Oklahoma are gearing up to repeat the

campaign in their areas, if necessary. But there is no doubt that in the population of Pottawatomie and Pontotoc Counties, some 70,000, thousands of people have become militant substitution-fighters. Many protest cards and letters hit the State Capitol, causing quite a stir, and probably killing drug substitution in Oklahoma for the foreseeable future. The people agreed with the campaign's slogan, "Politics and Medicine Don't Mix." Interestingly, older people led in number of protests, giving the lie to lobbyists who claim that retired people support substitution.

One letter from a woman in Shawnee to her state legislator read: "I am gravely concerned about the bill before the legislature which will permit drug substitution for the person preceding a prescription from his or her physician to a drug store.

"I feel this is a very dangerous bill and could have far reaching effects on the individual patient. I have a chronic ear condition and the particular drug prescribed by my physician is quite effective in giving relief. If I should have this drug substituted it could increase the infection or even might cause loss of hearing. In fact, this particular bill seems to be the most dangerous legislation which has been presented to the legislature.

"Please exert every effort to defeat this particular bill and you will certainly have contributed a great service to all the people in your district."

THE FUTURE

"Now that we know this kind of approach works — and works well," notes Dr. Combs, "we're ready to share it with all the other county medical societies in America. Any county society wanting to run a similar campaign will have to pay only for the media time — the Pottawatomie and Pontotoc County Societies will supply video tapes, audio tapes, and newspaper mats for free. Any county society that wants more information can write to the Congress of County Medical Societies [3037 Northwest 63rd Street, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73116] or Adsociates [5929 North May Avenue, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73112].

"Right now our societies and the CCMS are working to design a media campaign against the disaster of National Health Insurance for use in selected Congressional districts. The socialists haven't won this battle yet." *PRIVATE PRACTICE* will be reporting on this soon. □