

HEALTH

Tobacco companies On The Defensive

BY LAURENCE MCQUILLAN

President Bill Clinton Thursday unleashed government regulators on the powerful tobacco industry in an attempt to curb smoking by young people, prompting immediate opposition from the industry.

"We should do everything we possibly can to keep tobacco out of the hands of our young people," Clinton said during a brief meeting with young people in the Oval Office. He was to detail his plan at a news conference later Thursday.

Tobacco companies immediately responded in the courts to try to stop measures being proposed by the Food and Drug Administration to carry out Clinton's plan. A coalition of advertisers said it also planned to file a lawsuit against proposed curbs on tobacco advertising.

The FDA unveiled a set of proposed rules including a ban on cig-

rette vending machines and strict new limits on advertising of cigarettes and smokeless tobacco products.

Sponsorship of sporting events by cigarette makers would be prohibited, although the corporate parents of such firms would still be able to underwrite athletic events.

In addition, the FDA called for a \$150 million education and advertising campaign funded by the tobacco industry to discourage young people from smoking. The agency proposed a federal ban on tobacco sales to those under 18, extending a ban already effective in many states.

The agency said nicotine was a drug and thus can be regulated, but it added that no outright ban on the sale of tobacco products was planned.

As the cumbersome, time-consuming regulatory process started unfolding, the White House said Clinton would prefer congressional

action to accomplish his goal of cutting teen smoking by 50 percent by 2000.

"From the president's point of view, the ideal outcome would be for Congress to very quickly enact legislation that codifies exactly these measures that he proposes today," White House spokesman Mike McCurry told reporters.

McCurry said congressional action would make it less likely that the effort would get bogged down in court.

R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. and the other four major U.S. cigarette manufacturers said Thursday they had filed suit against the FDA and David Kessler, the agency's commissioner, asking the courts to block the FDA's move.

"The FDA's attempt to exert jurisdiction over cigarettes is an unprecedented and unlawful effort to extend its regulatory reach far beyond its stat-

tutory mandate and to usurp the legislative authority of Congress," said Charles Blixt, senior vice president and general counsel of R.J. Reynolds, the maker of Camel cigarettes.

"Clearly, the FDA's intent to regulate cigarettes indicates their true goal is behaving adult choices and adult behaviors — not youth access to cigarettes," he added in a statement announcing the suit.

It said the suit was filed in federal court in North Carolina, a key tobacco-producing state.

Clinton's initiative had potentially vast economic and political consequences. The FDA estimates that its proposals will cost the tobacco industry \$39 million in one-time costs and \$227 million in annual operating expenses, including the cost of the advertising campaign.

But it estimated that overall health benefits to the U.S. popula-

tion could total as much as \$43 billion a year if smoking by young people can be cut in half.

Politically, the tobacco crackdown could be risky for Clinton, who faces an uphill re-election battle in 1996.

Tobacco production is a big element of the economies of several Southern or border states, including North Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky and Maryland and the measures would indirectly touch other states like South Carolina, which produces tobacco-related products.

Big medical groups, briefed by Clinton on Thursday, welcomed the proposals.

"The American Heart Association views this as probably the most important public health move by the government in the last 30 years," the association's president, Sidney Smith, told reporters.

Democrats in Congress generally applauded the plan but tobacco-state lawmakers — mostly Republicans but also some Democrats — called it a possible infringement on free choice.

"The procedures he is proposing border on infringing on personal freedom, people's right to make choices for themselves," said Sen. John Warner, a Virginia Republican.

McCurry said Clinton was compelled to act by irrefutable evidence that smoking is harmful physically, and is attracting young people in rapidly growing numbers after a decline in the 1970s and 1980s.

"The main reason that we are acting now is that the FDA has completed a study of this issue that began in February, 1994 ... The president had no choice but to act on the scientific determination made by the FDA," he said.

Experimental Drug Dissolves Fat

A newly discovered protein has helped fat mice get thin, raising hopes that it could lead to a new weapon in the never-ending human war on flab.

Three separate research papers appearing on Friday in the journal *Science* describe advances made since a team last December identified the "ob" gene believed to make mice obese.

"This is a clear demonstration that the protein works in animals," said Dr. Jeffrey Friedman, a Rockefeller University scientist who was one of the "ob" gene discoverers.

The journal *Science* released the studies early after news leaked on Wall Street and started affecting stock prices of at least two companies involved in the search for drugs to help people lose weight and keep it off.

Americans spend some \$30 billion a year on weight control. And obesity is a vast public health problem linked to diabetes, heart disease,

strokes and some cancers. So the economic and medical potential is huge. But the research is still in very early stages, and crucial questions remain about whether the "ob" gene and the protein it produces, a hormone Friedman called leptin for the Greek root for "thin," work the same way in humans as they do in mice.

Although a genetic tendency to fat seems likely, doctors stress that diet, exercise and lifestyle are also crucial for both slimness and overall good health.

The *Science* papers report on two different, but related, research directions.

In one vein, Friedman and his colleagues at Rockefeller and at the California biotech company Amgen are looking at leptin itself as a potential diet therapy. Amgen paid Rockefeller \$20 million for a license to develop products based on the gene.

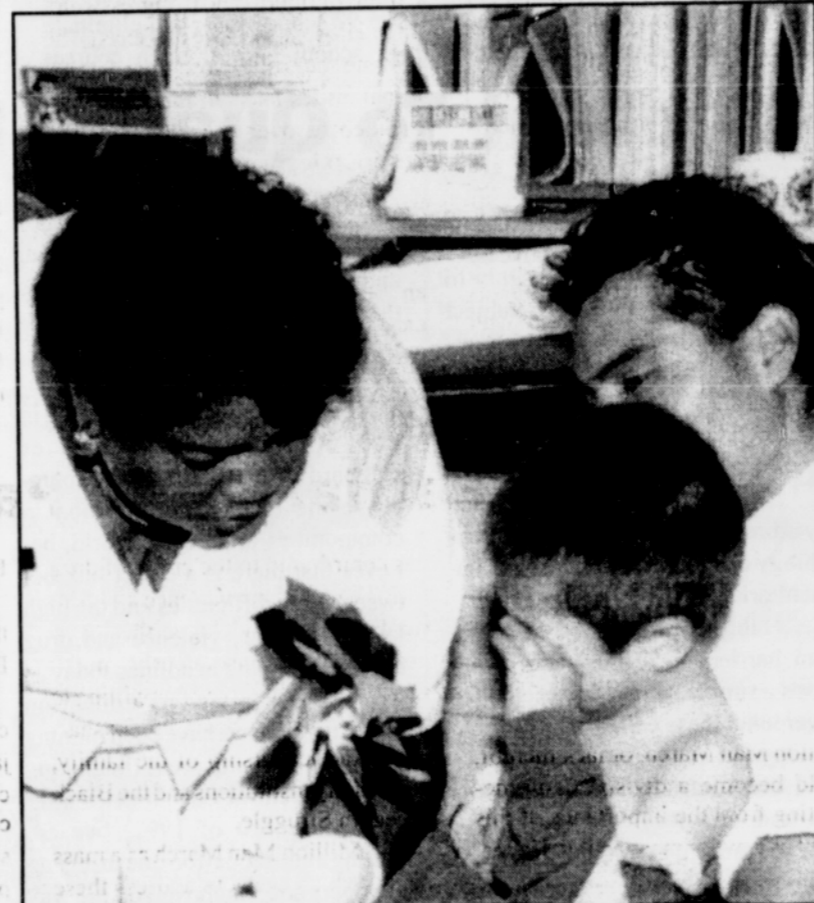
In the other, a team at Hoffman-

LaRoche Inc. and its corporate partner Millenium are looking more closely at how the protein acts on the brain.

They are interested in seeing whether the problem in humans is not so much a lack of the hormone itself but a problem in the brain's ability to get the message the hormone is sending about fat regulation and food intake.

Friedman, a Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigator at Rockefeller, found that mice who lacked the ob gene and made no leptin lost 30 percent of their body weight when treated with the hormone for two weeks.

Amgen chief executive officer Gordon Binder said the company hopes to start preliminary clinical trials in 1996 on humans to test for safety. Under a "best case scenario," a drug could be available in three or four years, but he stressed that much work still has to be done.



Jose Calva-Diaz, 4, receives a toy from nurse Marie Hensley of Multnomah County after receiving an immunization at the Neighborhood Health Clinic, 4945 N.E. 7th. Shots, to prevent childhood diseases, were given free to children throughout the Portland area Aug. 5 in a special campaign sponsored in part by McDonald's Restaurants of Oregon and Southwest Washington. (Photo by Duane Lewis)

Pain may be eliminated for millions

(SPECIAL)—The Federal Government has approved a drug that is exciting researchers in the treatment of pain. The material has been included in the formula for a new product known as "Arthur Itis™" and is being called a "Medical Miracle" by some, in the treatment of debilitating conditions such as arthritis, bursitis, rheumatism, painful muscle aches, joint aches, simple backache, bruises, and more. Although the mechanism of action is unclear, experiments indicate that Arthur Itis™ relieves pain by first selectively attracting, and then destroying the messenger chemical which carries pain sensations to the brain, thus eliminating pain in the affected area. Arthur Itis™ is an odorless, greaseless, non-staining cream and is available immediately without a prescription and is guaranteed to work. Use only as directed.

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Vitamin C Used As Sun Protector

A liquid formula containing large amounts of Vitamin C may protect sun worshippers from skin cancer even as it erases wrinkles and encourages skin to regenerate, a scientist said.

Sheldon Pinnel, a dermatologist at Duke University Medical Center, said preliminary testing on mice and on humans in Canada has shown the concentrated liquid appears to control the skin's swelling reaction to the sun's burning rays.

Extended use could promote the production of collagen by the skin, potentially ridding the skin of wrinkles.

It also protects for three days after being absorbed.

"Sunscreens block by absorbing the rays of the sun but no sun-screen can block all the rays," Pinnel said, adding he would recommend use of both sunscreens and his product, called Cellex.

"Vitamin C causes a chemical reaction to (ultraviolet) light ... acting as a modest anti-inflammatory, which is effective in treating sunburn," he said at a meeting of the American Academy of Dermatology.

The fluid contains 20 to 40 times

more Vitamin C than the average person can ingest in a day. It causes a chemical reaction within the skin cells and mitigates sunburn.

Normally, intense sun can temporarily suppress the immune system, which scientists believe can later lead to skin cancer.

Cellex has been introduced in Canada but not in the United States,

although it would not require government approval because its combination of ingredients have previously been approved for other cosmetic uses.

Research May Lead To Safer Aspirin

A safer aspirin with fewer side-effects may be marketed in years ahead now that researchers have unlocked the ancient mystery of how the pain reliever works.

"The drug companies are already hot on this," said Dr. Michael Garavito, of the University of Chicago Medical Center.

"The bottom line is that one can now build a better aspirin. It won't be more effective, but it would be safer to take," said Garavito, who together with French scientists has shown how aspirin and pain relievers like it stop pain and inflammation.

Aspirin has been used by humans for thousands of years. It was

first taken as an herbal preparation made from willow tree bark and then synthesized in pure form a century ago.

Its chemical dynamics remained a mystery until recently. They have now been explained by Garavito and colleagues at the Institut of Biology in Paris.

Scientist Discover Alzheimer Gene

A newly-discovered risk gene for Alzheimer's disease may help doctors better understand the disease and may lead to more effective drug treatment.

Research published in the August issue of *Nature Genetics* showed the new gene, called ACT, interacts with a well-known risk gene called Apo Lipo Protein E4.

Dr. Steven DeKosky, co-author of the article and director of the Alzheimer's Disease Research Center at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, said the interaction of the two genes is linked to the progression of Alzheimer's disease.

The discovery of the second gene categorizes Alzheimer's disease as a polygenic disease, DeKosky said. Until its discovery, the disease was classified as a singular disease because only one gene

was linked to its cause. "This will be a major finding," he said. "It helps us understand Alzheimer's as a disease that is probably influenced in a variety of ways, and therefore we can influence it in a variety of ways with drugs. We think it's a breakthrough."

DeKosky said the second gene will help doctors better understand the genetic mechanisms that cause Alzheimer's disease to either progress or slow down.

"Basically, it puts the geneticists ahead of the therapists," he said. "We'll probably learn something about Alzheimer's that can be treated with a drug," he said.

Neil Buckholtz, acting associate director of the National Institute on Aging program that funded the research, said the finding's significance lies in the future.

"This isn't a quantum leap forward, it's first in a series of developments toward a treatment of Alzheimer's," Buckholtz said in a telephone interview. "It will provide target genes for drugs developed in the future."

He said the new finding makes diagnosis of the disease more reliable. The institute estimates that 4 million Americans suffer from Alzheimer's at a cost of about \$100 billion annually.

Alzheimer's disease is a degenerative, neurological disorder with symptoms usually beginning between the ages of 60 and 70.

Symptoms include short-term memory loss, impaired judgment and personality changes. People suffering from the disease ultimately lose all reasoning abilities and are unable to care for themselves.

It's Wise to have Us immunized

Why immunize us?

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Because, immunizing children on schedule is the best protection against dangerous childhood diseases. Along with regular checkups at the doctor's office or local health clinic, immunizations are the best way to keep all children healthy.

HERE'S THE SCHEDULE

Vaccine	Months						Years			
	Birth	2	4	6	12	15	18	4-6	11-12	14-16
Hepatitis B Hepatitis B	■								■	
DTP Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis (Whooping Cough)	■	■	■	■	■	■	■			
Tetanus-Diphtheria Tetanus, Diphtheria										■
Haemophilus influenzae type b		■	■	■	■	■	■			
Polio Polio		■	■	■	■	■	■			
MMR Measles, Mumps, Rubella									■ or ■	
Varicella Chicken pox										■

Shaded bars indicate range of acceptable ages for vaccination. These recommended ages should not be thought of as absolute. Vaccine schedules are changed as new vaccines, combinations of current vaccines, and indications are licensed. (■) Previously unimmunized preschoolers/adolescents should be immunized. (■) Those who have not had a documented case of chicken pox or have not been immunized should receive the vaccine. For more specific information, parents are encouraged to contact their pediatrician or local public health official.

If you don't have a pediatrician, or don't know where to go in your community for your child's vaccinations, the following toll-free Immunization Hotline can help you. Call 1-800-232-2522.

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