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How the AMA Got Rich & Powerful: "The AMA's Seal of Approval"

George H. Simmons came up with the brilliant idea to transform the AMA into a big business by granting the AMA's "seal of approval" to certain drug companies that placed large and frequent ads in JAMA and its various affiliate publications.

By Dana Ullman, MPH, CCH, Contributor

Evidence Based Homeopath

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2. They were required to advertise in every local, regional, and national AMA publication (i.e., the drug companies were forced to pay the AMA a large amount of money)

By 1903, the AMA's advertising revenue increased substantially to \$89,000, and by 1909, JAMA was making \$150,000 per year. In 1900, the AMA had only 8,000 members, but by 1910, it had more than 70,000. This substantial increase in advertising revenue and membership was not the result of new effective medical treatments, for there were virtually no medical treatments from this era that were effective enough to be used by doctors today or even just a couple of decades later.



These Vintage Cleaning Products Are Still The Best For Getting Things Spotless



Your Favorite Childhood Toys Are Having A Major Comeback

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today as Abbott Laboratories), did not provide "blackmail" money to the AMA and when none of his products were granted AMA approval, Abbott went on the offensive. He arranged for an investigation of the AMA president that revealed that Simmons had no credible medical credentials, that he had had sex charges brought by some of his patients, and that he had had charges of negligence in the deaths of others.(1) After this meeting, the drugs made by Abbott Laboratories were regularly approved, and the company was not required to place or pay for any ads.

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In 1913, Simmons and the AMA went on the offensive even more strongly by their establishment of the "Propaganda Department," which was specifically dedicated to attacking any and all unconventional medical treatments and anyone (MD or not) who practiced them. In this same year, Simmons hired Morris Fishbein, MD, as a publicity man for the AMA.

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media to attack anyone who provided a real or perceived threat to conventional medicine. Besides severe attacks against anyone who practiced unconventional medical treatments, Fishbein and the AMA were also initially extremely antagonistic to those conventional medical doctors who supported pre-paid health insurance.(5)

Fishbein was a medical doctor who did not practice medicine. He was, however, an effective advocate for conventional medicine and a vocal critic of unconventional treatments. Shortly after he became head of the AMA, he wrote several books sharply critical of "medical quackery." He called chiropractic a

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(June 21, 1937).

There are also numerous stories about Fishbein's efforts to purchase the rights to various healing treatments, and whenever the owner refused to sell such rights, Fishbein would label the treatment as quackery (Ausubel, 2000). If the owner of the treatment or device was a doctor, this doctor would be attacked by Fishbein in his writings and placed on the AMA's quackery list. And if the owner of the treatment or device was not a doctor, it was common for him to be arrested for practicing medicine without a license or have the product confiscated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or the Federal Trade

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"Just what the doctor ordered" (L&M cigarettes), and "For digestion's sake, smoke Camels" (because the magical Camel cigarettes would "stimulate the flow of digestive fluids").

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in the AMA in 1950, JAMA published research results for the first time about the harmfulness of tobacco. Medical student Ernst Wynder and surgeon Evarts Graham of Washington University in St. Louis found that 96.5 percent of lung cancer patients in their hospitals had been smokers. **Very shortly after the Morris Fishbein left the AMA, he became a high-paid consultant to one of the large tobacco companies, and JAMA finally was able to publish a slew of studies that confirmed the real dangers of tobacco.**

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from Rotunda Hospital in Dublin, Ireland, and yet that hospital never issued diplomas. He further advertised himself as having spent a year and a half working in the largest hospitals in London and Vienna, facts that were in dispute. Simmons even declared himself a specialist in skin diseases, genito-urinary diseases, and rectal diseases (he did seem to be "imbued" in this latter subject but not medically speaking). When confronted with these charges, Simmons asserted that his errors in advertisements were not regarded as unethical in Nebraska, where he practiced (Ausubel, 2000; Mullins, 1988). It seems that Simmons was the epitome of the quack-charlatan to which he was so vehemently antagonistic. Even more startling is the fact that he openly had a

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range of subjects.

(3) Even Henry Pritchett, head of the Carnegie Foundation, came to view the Council's power "in much the way Dr. Frankenstein viewed his own creation" (Brown, 1979, Chapter 4).

(4) Some states didn't recognize graduates of medical schools with a "B" or "C" rating, giving additional power to the AMA's educational standards (Roberts, 1938).

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