



VIDEO AND HEALTH CARE

Structural change is coming late to medicine because the people who have catalyzed other institutional change are mostly young and therefore not in great need of on-line health services. While many young doctors disagree with the policies of the powerful American Medical Association, most do not want to jeopardize their hard-earned careers through active opposition. Those who are outspoken often confuse political rhetoric with practical solutions.

Two things are becoming clear: That the basis of health care must shift from curing to prevention. And that preventive medicine inherently places importance upon the complete environment in which a person lives.

The following two articles detail this trend. The People's Video Theater bring an understanding of new media tools to health care; and Michael Schwartz, a medical student, projects the needs of what he calls "second generation medicine" onto the capabilities of new media tools.

A study done by three students and a professor at Wayne State University School of Medicine (Detroit) gives strong insight into how we are misusing our most powerful information tool (broadcast TV) in the area of health care. For one week in late 1970 the group monitored 130 hours of broadcast television for health care information and found basically that information is fragmented to suit the profit needs of manufacturers rather than the real needs of viewers.

Their specific conclusions were:

1. Health-related items comprise a significant amount of a typical week of television, 7.2%.
2. 70% of these items are unsatisfactory as health education or information because they are inaccurate or misleading or both.
3. There is very little useful health information on television and there is almost no attempt to do health education.
4. Health professionals do not utilize television to any significant extent in solving important health problems.
5. Major health problems in the Detroit area such as heart disease, cancer, stroke, accidents, hepatitis, maternal death, hunger, venereal disease, mental health, sex education, child care, lead poisoning and family planning are virtually ignored by television.

From the study: HEALTH INFORMATION DURING A WEEK OF TELEVISION by Frank A. Smith, Geoffrey Trivax, and David A. Zuehlke. Medical Students; and Paul Lowinger, M.D. Associate Professor; Departments of Community Medicine and Psychiatry, Wayne State University School of Medicine, Detroit.