

views have progressed through all seven stages, their ideas become solid and stable, and they accept the consequences of the views they hold," writes Yankelovich (More info from www.publicagenda.org)

ITEMS OF INTEREST TO PROFESSIONALS

¶ **This Is A Critical Time For Public Relations Leadership**, writes David Geary (who held senior communication posts at Lockheed Martin and the US Dep'ts of Energy and Defense and taught leadership and communication at the US Air Force Academy and several universities). "Those who lived through World War II tell us the decisions people make now will affect how they will be seen for the rest of their lives." Today, organizations and their leaders need savvy guidance so they "don't misstep at this critical juncture. The stakes are high. All reputations are up for review and verification in a crisis. War is the ultimate crisis. This war, like others, will separate the weak public relations professionals from the strong. Those who have prepared and proven themselves in such things as leadership communication, crisis communication and change management should do well. But those senior public relations professionals who do not have extensive and varied communications experience – and are not grounded in the academic literature to know what works – are most likely looking over their shoulders for those who do."

¶ **Education Reformer Harnesses The Power Of Fiction To Move His Agenda Forward.** Mack Hicks, well-known in the education reform community, has written a mystery thriller for his cause and pledges to donate profits to school reform. In his new novel, *Martyrs' Tomb*, Hicks examines school violence, adolescent gangs, and corruption within the education world and presents it as a thrilling read. A compelling awareness tool.

¶ **Two Glimpses Into Future Scenarios** from *Outlook 2002* – the World Future Society's roundup of thought-provoking forecasts, scenarios and solutions (copy from WFS, 7910 Woodmont Ave, Ste.4540, Bethesda, MD 20814; www.wfs.org):

1. **An elder care crisis in the near future** could make baby boomers forget about the childcare crunch of the recent past. It could put younger women's careers at risk as they become caregivers for their elderly parents and in-laws. Women account for 72% of family caregivers, according to Sam Ervin, CEO of the SCAN Health Plan. Nearly a third of caregivers report altering their career paths (such as turning down promotions) and some leave the workforce altogether.
2. **Slowing down life may prove an antidote to hyperculture.** The Slow Food movement begun in the 1980s has evolved into a Slow Cities movement in Italy, where 32 communities have committed to slowing down the hectic pace of life.

¶ **Translate Online With Babelfish.** Twenty-six different language combinations (including English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese and Russian) are available for you to get up to 150 words of text or a page from the Web translated...for free. Go to www.altavista.com and in the Search For box enter Bablefish.

¶ **Only A One Word Description Of A Patient's Medical Condition Should Be Released To The Media** without prior patient authorization, according to a new guidelines issued by the Society for Healthcare Strategy and Market Development of the American Hospital Ass'n. Downloadable from the Society's website, www.stratsociety.org or call 800-AHA-2626, item #166851.

DIRECT - TO - CONSUMER PRESCRIPTION DRUG ADS ARE AGAIN IN THE NEWS; SURVEY GIVES THEM MIXED REVIEWS

The pharmaceutical industry is in the spotlight. *Business Week's* Dec. 10th cover story, "Drug Prices, What's Fair?," reports that overall spending on prescriptions has been rising at 14% to 18% a year, and for 2001 it will be between \$160 billion and \$170 billion. Healthcare as a percent of GDP has risen from 5.1% in 1960 to a current estimate of 15.9%. Drug makers rake in huge profits, writes *Business Week*. Since 1988, the return on equity of the five biggest U.S.-based ones has averaged 30% a year, compared with 27% for Microsoft Corporation and 21% for companies in the Standard & Poor's 500-stock index.

One of the reasons drug makers have been doing well is the increased use of direct-to-consumer (DTC) ads. Drug companies spent \$2.5 billion on advertising prescription drugs to consumers last year, nearly tripling between 1997 and 2000, reports *Brandweek*. Proponents of DTC ads say they help educate the public about health conditions and medications available to treat them and encourage better patient-physician dialogues. Critics say these ads push consumers to ask, even demand, drugs that they might not even need.

Schering-Plough's media/marketing of Claritin, its allergy medication, netted the company \$3 billion in worldwide sales last year. After the campaign was begun in 1997, the Claritin logo suddenly appeared everywhere – in banners, tote bags, and on tv ads with famous celebrities. Another drug company, Pfizer, succeeded in building a bond with consumers with its well-known Viagra campaign, helping them to understand how impotence may affect a man's life and his relationships. By calling impotence an "erectile dysfunction," Pfizer made the condition something men experience, rather than something that is wrong with them.

SURVEY SHOWS HOW PEOPLE RESPOND TO DTC ADS

A survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation released on Nov. 29, answers such questions as how well do people understand the ads, how likely are they to ask their doctor for more information or for a prescription drug, and whether they recall information from the ads about side effects.

The nationwide survey of over 2,500 adults used a new, internet-based survey technique, which allowed respondents to receive and view ads within the context of the survey on their own television within their own homes. The total sample was divided into two groups, the "viewers" and "non-viewers." The viewers were further divided into three groups, each of which saw a different prescription drug ad: Pfizer's Lipitor, which treats high cholesterol; Merck's Singulair, which treats asthma; and Astra Zeneca's Nexium, which treats heartburn or acid reflux disease. Key findings:

1. **DTC ads do increase sales of an advertised prescription drug.** Of the 30% of respondents who talked with a doctor about it, 44% said the doctor gave them the prescription medicine they talked about. Physicians also responded in a variety of other ways to these discussions, including



recommending a) changes in patients' behavior or lifestyle (35%), b) a different prescription drug (25%), c) no drug (19%), or d) an over-the-counter drug (15%). As might be expected, those with greatest health needs – such as the elderly and those in poor health – are more likely to talk to their doctors about a medicine they saw advertised. The report concludes: **one in eight Americans (13%) has received a specific prescription in response to seeing an ad.**

2. **DTC ads get mixed reviews on educational impact.** On the one hand, 70% of those who saw the ads indicated small knowledge gain. In a self-assessment, they said they learned little or nothing more about the health condition, and a majority (59%) said they knew little or nothing more about the drug.

On the other hand, satisfaction with the ads was high. Many adults said that ads they had just seen did a "good" or "excellent" job in telling them about the condition the advertised medicine is designed to treat (84%), the medicine's potential benefits (72%), and who should take it (66%). Fewer, but still about half, said the same about potential side effects (52%) and directions for using the medicine (47%). It should be noted that FDA guidelines for DTC ads require that television prescription drug ads include a thorough "major statement" prominently disclosing all of the major risks associated with the drug.

3. **DTC ads are trusted.** So believe 64% of respondents who had just seen an ad and were more likely to trust the information in the ad about the health condition than those who had not just seen an ad (33%). The immediate impact apparently wears off quickly.

GESTALT PSYCHOLOGY AT WORK

The Kaiser survey concludes that the public's assessment of tv prescription drug ads seems to be strongly affected by whether people are assessing a specific ad or prescription drug ads in general. "Those who have just seen an ad tend to give it a fairly positive assessment and have a much more favorable opinion of that ad compared to the public's opinions of ads in general." That's what gestalt psychologists say, that the sum of the parts may be greater or smaller than the totality, i.e., the overall impression.

(Copies of the survey report, *Understanding the Effects of Direct-to-Consumer Prescription Drug Advertising*, is available online at www.kff.org/marketplace, or can be obtained through the Foundation's publications request line at (800) 656-4533.)

FOR BIN LADENS, SILENCE HAS NOT BEEN GOLDEN; CONSTRUCTION GROUP SEEKS PR COUNSEL TO POSITION ITSELF IN COURT OF PUBLIC OPINION

According to the UK-based newspaper, *The Guardian*, the Bin Laden Group, a construction company, is seeking pr counsel to help salvage its reputation and avoid a consumer backlash against the deeds of Osama, who was disowned by the family years ago. The group has met several times with WMC Communications (London), but director Scott Learmouth wants to clarify that the group is not a client yet. "We haven't been appointed," he told *prr*. "I don't want to appear presumptuous."

He says he can't comment on what his firm would do for the company if it were to take the account, but he does say that ethics is not a problem. "I can say that before we take on any client we have to be

comfortable and believe that we're doing the right thing." CEO David Wynne-Morgan is more forthcoming to *The Guardian*: "We have had meetings with the Bin Laden Group and we have checked them out and they have no links with terrorism. I would have no problem in working for them, they are one of the largest construction groups in the world, but our appointment is by no means certain."

Wynne-Morgan formerly worked for Hill & Knowlton, itself no stranger to controversial accounts. As to what the firm would do for the Bin Laden Group, "media placement or something more strategic," Learmouth wouldn't say.

BIN LADENS FEEL IT'S TIME TO TALK

Wynne-Morgan says pr is new to the Bin Laden Group but that they're getting desperate. Silence, stonewalling, and hoping the problem would disappear simply hasn't worked. "PR is completely contrary to their culture. They never talk to the press; they are a large company run by 52 members of the family and they don't like doing things in the glare of publicity, especially because the Saudi government is their biggest client," he explains. "They thought that, if they did nothing, all the interest in them would go away – but clearly it won't. They want to make certain that whatever is published is true and factual." (For more info, contact WMC in the U.K. @ 442-207-591-2999.)

PUBLIC AGENDA PUBLISHES AN ONLINE GUIDE TO ISSUES IN MEDICAL RESEARCH

Medical research developments – human cloning, stem cell and gene research – are frequently front page news. To provide context to these developments, an online guide to issues in medical research has been developed by Public Agenda (a nonpartisan nonprofit) and the Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation. The guide is accessible at www.publicagenda.org and at www.laskerfoundation.org.

"The decisions being made about how much to invest in medical research, where the dollars should go, and what kinds of research will be pursued will quite literally affect the lives of millions of Americans," says Jean Johnson, director of programs at Public Agenda. Guide is designed for elected officials, journalists, students, analysts and the general public. It provides balanced data, survey results, extensive resource lists, and news at the heart of the debate over funding, genetic testing and engineering, bioethics, informed consent and related topics.

PUBLIC OPINION IS EVOLVING

"The general public, while having a generally favorable view of science and medical research, is unfamiliar with many of the terms and concepts surrounding these issues. Public debate on gene therapy, stem cell research and human cloning, like the research itself, is in its infancy," notes the online guide.

Public opinion is not static. It evolves through seven distinct stages, according to Daniel Yankelovich, co-founder of Public Agenda. The stages are 1) dawning awareness, 2) greater urgency, 3) reaching for solutions, 4) wishful thinking, 5) weighing the choices, 6) taking a stand intellectually, and 7) making a responsible judgment morally and emotionally. And unless one understands where people are in this process, survey results can frequently mislead. "People often approach an issue initially with strong, emotionally laden feelings and opinions, which tend to be unstable and changeable. The quality of public opinion at this stage is raw and unformed. However, when people's