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## Replacing Dr. David Satcher

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By Jane Chastain

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He's an African-American doctor who has served in ethnically and socio-economically diverse population centers on both coasts. He's concerned about the health of the nation and he isn't afraid to speak out on controversial subjects like abortion, teen-age pregnancy, sexual orientation and condoms. He has a wide circle of influence and feels that our country should make health decisions based on scientific evidence and sound medical practice. No, he isn't this nation's surgeon general, but he isn't shy about taking on our country's top doc.

Shortly after Dr. David Satcher released a "Call to Action to Promote Sexual Health and Responsible Sexual Behavior," Dr. John R. Diggs Jr. released one of his own, along with a stinging analysis of Satcher's material.

Diggs found Satcher's report to be seriously flawed:

- Satcher asserts that there are 5.5 million new cervical cancer cases occurring per year. While this figure represents a guess by one statistician, the best available evidence suggests 15,000 new cervical cancer cases each year. Dr. Diggs points out, "The Surgeon General is only off by a factor of 367!"

Satcher is correct in saying that cervical cancer is a serious problem. It is the No. 2 cause of cancer deaths among women. However his prescription is wrong, dead wrong. Over 90 percent of all invasive cervical cancers are linked to the human papillomavirus (HPV), the most common STD in the United States. HPVs are a collection of more than 70 types of viruses – 30 of which can infect the genital tracts of both men and women.

Some HPVs cause warts or papillomas on various parts of the body. However, only one out of 100 people infected with HPV experience these symptoms. Transmission can occur without the presence of any visible symptoms and these strains are more likely to be cancerous. Dr. Satcher's prescription for this and every other STD is condoms. However, HPV is not spread from one person to another through the exchange of bodily fluids, but through skin-to-skin contact. Therefore, condoms are useless against HPV.

- Dr. Satcher blurs the line between unintended pregnancies and unwanted pregnancies.

"While 50 percent of pregnancies may be unintended, that does not mean that 50 percent are unwanted," explained Diggs. Furthermore, there is no established link between "wantedness" and child abuse. Dr. Diggs points out that the legal and social acceptance of abortion has paralleled the upward charge of child abuse statistics.

Satcher bemoans the high number of abortions in this country but wants your children to have unrestricted access to "reproductive health services." The siren song of abortion can appear to be a quick fix for an embarrassing problem to a youngster but can lead to a lifetime of regret, as well as serious emotional and physical problems. Although 27 out of 35 studies published since 1957 have linked abortion with breast cancer, there was no mention of this health risk in the Satcher report.

Satcher's prescription: more access to sex education that includes condoms and more condoms. Despite intensive sex education in the classroom, condom use is up only slightly among sexually active teens and remains in the 50 percent range. This is not hard for any parent to understand. Teens have not reached the age of responsibility. They forget their books, their homework assignments and their lunches. We give them permission to fool around and then expect them to remember condoms!

Even when they do use condoms, studies show they break or slip off 15.1 percent of the time. However, the condom failure rate in preventing pregnancies among teen-agers is closer to 20 percent.

Dr. Satcher reports the wide consensus that abortion should be rare. "If it is not killing, Why should it be rare?" Diggs asked. "If it is killing, why does he seek more access?"

- Satcher repeats the erroneous assertion that has been thrown around that 22 percent of women are raped.

Dr. Diggs points out that statistics do show that 22 percent of women have experienced unwanted sexual touching but takes Satcher to task for blurring the lines between rape and unwanted sexual interactions. "To equate all of these episodes with rape is to trivialize rape," he explained. "The Surgeon General is artificially inflating a statistic that needs no exaggeration to be regrettable."

- The surgeon general reports, "Sexual orientation is usually determined by adolescence, if not earlier, and there is no valid scientific evidence that sexual orientation can be changed."

Diggs believes that is his most egregious assertion. Thousands of people who used to practice homosexuality have told their personal stories of change to offer hope to those trapped in this self-destructive activity. This has been completely ignored, as have the serious, completely preventable, deadly consequences to homosexual activity. "The periodic brouhaha over the discovery of a 'gay gene' is always followed by much quieter retractions. No scientist has confirmed the presence of a 'gay gene,'" said Diggs. "People are not homosexual. They perform homosexual acts. We humans are either male or female. 'Gays' do not have different 'equipment.'"

- Dr. Satcher blames those opposed to the mainstreaming of homosexuality in the classroom and elsewhere for the high rates of mental disease found among those practicing homosexuality.

"To come to this conclusion, he must ignore similar high rates of mental disease, including suicide, among practitioners that has been documented in societies which have come to embrace this activity," said Diggs. "Lastly, he ignores the fact that most 'anti-gay violence' is perpetrated by 'gays' themselves

in domestic violence settings."

The Surgeon General's report leads those practicing homosexuality to believe they are trapped. Again, his prescription is more of the deadly condoms. Although studies have shown condoms to be effective in reducing the risk of HIV/AIDS transmission, the operative word is "reduce" not "prevent." In fact, some of those studies have success rates of no better than 60 percent. That means that 40 percent of the people in those studies, who were relying on a thin piece of latex to protect them from HIV/AIDS, have contracted a disease that is 100 percent fatal. Would you fly with an airline that lost 40 percent of its planes? Of course not!

One of the most alarming studies on HIV/AIDS transmission was presented by Dr. Margaret Fischl at the Third International Conference on AIDS. Her study was done with women with monogamous relationships with HIV-positive partners. After 18 months of faithfully using condoms among these women who were strongly motivated to use them, 16 percent became infected.

In short, the surgeon general has given our young people a dangerous double message: Abstinence is best, but if you can't be abstinent use condoms. He pretends that there are no useful studies that indicate that when abstinence message is taught, rates of sexual activity among teen-agers go down. Also, he ignores the damning evidence that shows an increase in sexual activity among teenagers who are given condoms.

Studies have shown that all of us remember a lot more of what we see than what we hear. Teen-agers given condoms by sex educators have them long after the classroom lesson has been forgotten. They serve as school-sanctioned permission slips to have sex.

The surgeon general has turned in a flawed report and has failed to fully inform the public of the real public health threats caused by out-of-wedlock sex. Here is a list of warnings that should have been issued, warnings provided by Dr. John R. Diggs:

- Lack of effectiveness of condoms in curtailing many STDs
- Lack of contact tracing and HIV notification by name
- Childhood exposure to pornography, not simply "unsolicited" pornography which was mentioned by the surgeon general
- Sexual exploitation due to the lack of enforcement of statutory rape laws
- The role the "safe sex" teaching has played in the habituation of promiscuous activity and in spreading STDs
- The ultra-high disease and health risk of anal intercourse (heterosexual and homosexual)
- The de-emphasis of marriage, the only time-tested stable institution that benefits women and children and encourages fidelity
- The rash of reports of oral genital contact among shockingly young students
- Post-abortion trauma and the documented relationship of increased breast cancer to elective abortion, especially for the young

Dr. David Satcher has failed the nation as surgeon general and should be asked to resign. If President George W. Bush is looking for an effective replacement, I can think of no one better than Dr. John R. Diggs. He can be found at his office in western Massachusetts or through one of these valuable organizations he serves: the Physicians Consortium, Family Research Council, the Massachusetts Physicians Resource Council and the Abstinence Clearinghouse.