

# The Nicotine Challenger

Spring 2002

This issue: In Memory of John Slade, MD

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## A View From The Director



This issue of the Nicotine Challenger is overshadowed by our sense of loss resulting from the unexpected death of our leader, Professor John Slade. Many people from around the world have expressed their memories and thoughts about John on a memorial page at our website, [www.tobaccoprogram.org](http://www.tobaccoprogram.org). I'd encourage you all to read that memorial page in order to remind us what John stood for and what he achieved. The very last time I heard from John was on a message he left on my answering machine that I heard the day before he died. As always he was encouraging and supportive and he said that he wanted us to keep on doing what we were doing. At the time I simply thought that was just John being thoughtful and encouraging as always. I thought it was nice of him to say so, and I hit the delete button on my machine. Now his words seem to have a greater meaning, and are typical of John's ability to inspire others to do the work that he thought was so important.

At John's memorial service I spoke to many other people who had been similarly inspired by John. There seemed to be unanimity that it is now even more important that we carry on the work that he started. So I feel confident that John's spirit will live on in the work of all those people he inspired.

And there is certainly plenty of work to do. While the tobacco industry seems to be becoming even more creative in marketing their deadly addictive products, tobacco control has been threatened by budget deficits resulting from the recession. We are fortunate in New Jersey to have a strong advocacy group led by New Jersey Breathes, the coalition of organizations supporting tobacco control. I would urge you all to support New Jersey Breathes ([www.kickbuttnj.com](http://www.kickbuttnj.com)) in advocating for the continued strong funding of tobacco control in New Jersey, and for increases in tobacco excise tax as an effective method of increasing revenue while discouraging smoking.

In early February we completed another treatment group at the Tobacco Dependence Clinic, in which 11 of the 13 participants succeeded in stopping smoking completely. I would normally have passed on the good news to John the following day. He would have had a twinkle in his eyes as he said "terrific". This time he can read about it in the Challenger, and I hope he is pleased that we will all be continuing with the work that he started us on.

Warm regards,  
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## CHAMPION VS. TOBACCO

### JOHN D. SLADE, M.D.

by Bernice Order-Cornors



No one wants to write this article, because in doing so, it brings a greater reality to our loss and makes the pain of it all that much more acute. We write this with a heavy heart and in celebration of a man who touched so many lives. We write this as a community of voices, sharing our condolences with the many people who have lost a colleague, mentor and a friend.

We lost Dr. John Slade just a few weeks ago, and yet so many of us are more consciously aware than ever of his presence and impact on our professional and personal lives. Words will fall short in truly paying homage to this man. He has been described as an innovator and a celebrant of innovation in others, selfless, gently ironic, soft-spoken, brilliant, and unswerving. A man of integrity, honesty, caring and compassion. A brilliant strategist and analyst, a wonderful friend, an idealist, and a quiet Southern gentleman with a signature bow tie. We share these words with you, as you have shared your words with us.

On World No Tobacco Day in May 2001, The Tobacco Dependence Program celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We took the occasion to acknowledge John and his contribution not only to tobacco control in New Jersey, but also to his work worldwide. John was seated facing the front of the room while his staff all took places around our crowded conference room behind him. After sharing the story of the first time she met with him, Diane Lindberg, our Project Administrator, went on to say these words about John.

*"...David Kessler, Dean of Yale Medical School and former FDA Commissioner under two presidents and for both parties described John Slade as a "modest internist from New Jersey who authored the definitive text on nicotine addiction and who maintained a prodigious file on the activities of the tobacco industry" – a clear tribute to his unassuming manner and contrasting power.*

*Virtually every major tobacco control effort in New Jersey has been touched by John's expertise and commitment. He is constantly called upon by health departments, politicians, medical reporters, and countless other individuals and groups.*

*Local health officials and New Jersey politicians think of John as a member of the Public Health Council of the Department of Health and Senior Services, who never fails to advocate for tobacco dependence awareness and action. In this role, John*

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advocated for New Jersey's being designated as one of the CDC-sponsored ASSIST states, thus creating the first data collection and coalition-building efforts which built the foundation for future tobacco control activities.

Ever keeping tobacco at the forefront, John was also responsible for the hearing on Premier cigarettes in the 80's, and, in the early 90's for the inclusion of nicotine as an addiction problem along with alcohol and other drugs. Because of his firm guidance, New Jersey is one of the few states with a clear policy placing tobacco control and treatment in the Division of Addiction Services.

In the mid 1980's, John helped influence the Department of Health to change the name of the Commission on Smoking and Health to the Commission on Smoking OR Health. While this has caused confusion among secretaries and bureaucrats, it has also contributed to a great many teachable moments. When the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation awarded a Smokeless States grant to New Jersey through the Medical Society, John was one of the charter members of the resulting coalition and has provided consistent expert leadership of the group, which was named New Jersey Breathes.

Himself ASAM Board certified, John is the founding chair (1987) of the Nicotine Dependence Committee of the American Society of Addiction Medicine and is responsible for the establishment of a nicotine conference, which has been held annually since 1988.

John's most recent contribution to New Jersey tobacco control has consisted of his work to influence the Master Tobacco Settlement distribution in favor of education, prevention and treatment instead of deficit reduction, roads, and bridges, which have been the choices of many other states.

As chair of the Commissioner's Advisory Committee on Tobacco Dependence Treatment, John played a major role in the establishment of the wide spectrum of services now available for treating tobacco dependence. The Tobacco Dependence Clinic here in New Brunswick is a model program for clinical care, and the staff of the Tobacco Dependence Program is responsible for training personnel at 15 other clinics throughout New Jersey.

And from the Addressing Tobacco's original mission of helping addictions treatment programs integrate tobacco treatment on par with alcohol and other drugs, the current scope of the



The Tobacco Dependence Program staff and friends honored Dr. Slade with a plaque and a twinkling bow-tie tribute at the 10th Anniversary celebration.

Some of you know Regina Carlson, founder of New Jersey GASP. She has influenced many a city council to establish ordinances against vending machines and for smoke-free environments – and John has been a firm supporter of her efforts over the years, serving as a Board member since 1985.

But John's influence extends well beyond New Jersey. Not only did he act as advisor to Dr. Kessler at the FDA, but he has also served in an advisory capacity for the Federal Trade Commission. He is consistently called upon to share his expertise with other states (including Massachusetts, California, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania), at national conferences, and for the Canadian government and the World Health Organization.

John has often made himself available as counsel to national politicians as evidenced when [former New Jersey State] Senator Lautenberg complimented John during the School of Public Health convocation describing how helpful John had been when the Senator moved the legislature incrementally from a two-hour ban to a total smoking ban on domestic and international flights.

Tobacco Dependence Program also includes consultation and training for mental health programs and programs serving young people.

We have grown from a staff of two (John and Abby [Hoffman]) to our current compliment which is approaching 20.

The program's influence is the direct result of the leadership provided by John. But he is truly at his best on Tuesday afternoons, when he meets one-on-one with a man or woman struggling with addiction to tobacco. He is gentle, attentive, and his concern is evident. But he is dogged in his determination to prevail.

*It is a privilege for all of us to work with him."*

After a few more words were shared with John, we presented him with a plaque engraved with an image of a bowtie and our feelings of gratitude for him. When he looked up and around the room, in every corner was a staff person, each of us donning

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a flashing electric bowtie and wiping tears for the joy, inspiration, and opportunity he provided each of us, and in celebration of a man we so admired. He laughed as he recognized the first and then the second staff person sporting his trademark attire, only to realize there were nearly 20 of us, everywhere you looked.

John suffered a stroke in June, about a month later. As a result of the stroke he suffered aphasia, followed by another consequence of the stroke, depression. What never dimmed, what was never diminished, was his ability to clearly envision what needed to be done. Early on following his stroke, John asked that he be kept up-to-date on the goings-on in the office. As he was able, he did some work from his home. Soon after, he came to the office part-time. We were thrilled to have him back.

He was frustrated by the aphasia. He tired easily. He came back part-time and was committed to keeping his part-time status to care for himself. On his reduced schedule, he attended meetings, wrote emails and other correspondence, and continued to guide and prod us on. He had recently begun to give lectures to small groups. He continued to keep us informed on the latest deceptions of the tobacco industry and the newest additions to his Trinkets and Trash collection, which always brought that twinkle to his eye and rapt attention from his audience.

A colleague and friend of John's posted (in part) this note on the memorial section of the Tobacco Dependence Program website: "Even if you were a little off of your prime, you were still better than most of us. Careers have been built with your encouragement and support." Another colleague talked about keeping a folder of "'Slade-scapades' filled with ideas he had inspired over the years, some followed up on, and some of which are still like gifts waiting to be opened and explored." Yet another recalled a conversation with John regarding how he "managed the slings and arrows that came his way." John responded to his friend, "When you know you're right, you just take the position and wait for the rest of the folks to join you." And, as was shared at his memorial service on February 9<sup>th</sup>, when asked by a dear friend and colleague following President Clinton's announcement that he would support FDA regulation of tobacco - something John had fought so long for - to what he attributed his amazing success, he replied, "It is because I can work with anybody." There are so many little lessons that are becoming clearer as we think about our interactions with John.

In the last few years, the phrase that John kept returning to whenever we met up with resistance was, "it's the right thing to do." He had clarity of vision of what needed to be done. And he enjoyed and brought such joy to the process.

When asked where he got his strength, his stamina, to do so much, John acknowledged the strength and support he received from his wife and soul mate, Frances. Family was so important to John and he was devoted.

John was very clear in letting us know how he felt about his colleagues and friends in the tobacco control and public health fields. John had confidence in each of us to do things we never thought we could take on. He knew we each have the character, ability, and opportunity to do what needs to be done and considerably more. He believed in the success we could bring to the cause of public health and ending the tobacco pandemic. He loved and respected each of us, and in his untimely death, challenges each of us to honor his memory by carrying his work forward.

The torch has been passed.

"We are known by the tracks we leave behind." ~ Dakota proverb  
May you rest in peace gentle warrior.



*Dr. Slade with the staff of the former Addressing Tobacco Project*