Promoting healthier tomorrows through education and research today
Dean’s Message

Dear Alumni and Friends:

Did you know that half a million people die of cancer each year in this country? Evidence suggests one-third of those deaths are linked to exposure to tobacco products. Another third can be attributed to diet and physical activity habits.

Certainly genetic inheritance influences our risk for cancer. But, our behaviors play a significant role. By avoiding tobacco products, consuming a healthy diet, maintaining an appropriate weight and staying physically active throughout life, we can significantly reduce our risk.

At the University of Oklahoma College of Public Health, our researchers, educators and students are a powerful force for positive change that will help reduce the risk of cancer in communities throughout Oklahoma and beyond. We are pleased to serve as a partner in cancer prevention for the new OU Cancer Institute. In this issue, we focus on the positive strides we are making at OU in furthering cancer prevention.

As we begin a new academic year, we also look forward to continuing to advance our strategic plan.

We applaud the Bartlett Foundation, Cox Communications and the dedicated members of our Advisory Board as well as our alumni and friends. Their contributions help us provide educational opportunities and support for our students. Last year alone, the college expended more than $600,000 in student support through research assistantships, stipends, scholarships and tuition assistance.

Your generosity allows us to continue recruitment of excellent, nationally recognized faculty and outstanding students as well as increase our community-based prevention programs.

I hope you will enjoy reading this issue of OU Public Health magazine.

Best regards,

Gary E. Raskob, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Public Health, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center

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Provost’s Message

At the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, we remain steadfastly committed to ensuring that Oklahomans have access to the newest cancer treatments, the most advanced technology and the expertise of researchers and clinicians who are among the best in their chosen fields. Just as important, we are committed to preventing cancer.

These goals are driving forces as we finalize plans and begin construction of the new OU Cancer Institute.

With a solid team of experts at both our College of Public Health and our College of Medicine, we believe we have created a powerful one-two punch in the fight against cancer in Oklahoma and the entire region.

The College of Public Health plays a primary role in our cancer prevention efforts, including the new Oklahoma Tobacco Research Center with its mission to significantly reduce tobacco use and thereby reduce the number of tobacco-caused cancers.

With this team, the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center will provide new hope and a healthier future for all Oklahomans.

Joseph J. Ferretti, Ph.D.
Senior Vice President and Provost
University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center
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Death by Disproportion: The Health and Economic Consequences of Misplaced Priorities

“If you have intervention A that is 10 times more effective than intervention B at saving lives and you have fixed resources and you put the majority in intervention B, more people will die. And yet, in various areas of health policy, clinical practice and in our research funding, we tend to over concentrate resources, attention and energy on things that are less effective than their alternatives.”

Prevention Research Centers: Bridging Research to Practice

“The American people know what the CDC is all about, up to a point. But they would never relate the CDC to the most promising and the most important prevention aspect of public health, which is chronic disease prevention. We are going to try and change that.”

The New Politics of Public Health

“I want to reach out beyond the walls of the university and talk about the wonderful things going on at OU, an institution that works to benefit its people and state. You can’t do that with abstracts. Make it impossible to ignore public health.”

Health Care Reform: A Distortion in Time

“Our interest in health care reform is really driven in our sincere desire to see justice and equity prevail in this country. There is no way we can continue to sustain the increases in health care costs and increases in health insurance costs. It looms large.”

To watch Public Health Grand Rounds presentations, go online to www.coph.ouhsc.edu/coph/grandrounds.asp.
When Dr. Jim Curran arrived at the office of Assistant Secretary of Health Ed Brandt, he was facing a task that neither of them understood. The young epidemiologist from the CDC was embarking on an assignment from Brandt that would lead to the understanding and revelation of a disease that had never been seen before – a disease we now know as HIV/AIDS.

“At first, I don’t think we realized what a huge problem this would be. We had to find out what was causing it and how it was spreading,” Brandt said.

The two men came together again 25 years later during OU Public Health Grand Rounds, where Curran was honored as the college’s 2007 O. Ray Kling Distinguished Lecturer in International Health. He spoke about his journey and the public health impact of HIV. In the audience was Brandt, M.D., Ph.D., now a Regents’ Professor Emeritus in the College of Public Health.

“There’s no way I could have faced up to the scrutiny and gone to Congress if I hadn’t had the data that Jim produced. The way Jim Curran handled epidemiology set the standard for any other epidemic we might face that’s this widespread,” Brandt said.

Curran, M.D., M.P.H., is now dean and professor of epidemiology at the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University and director of the Emory Center for AIDS Research in Atlanta.

Curran and Brandt both received national recognition for their leadership in responding to the HIV epidemic. In fact, Curran received an award named after Brandt – the Edward N. Brandt Jr. Award – from the National Leadership Coalition on AIDS.

In a presentation titled “HIV/AIDS in the United States: Lessons From the First 25 Years,” Curran explained the first known cases among gay men in Los Angeles and the subsequent cases appearing in hemophiliacs, intravenous drug users, women and children. He said innovative science overcame skepticism and fear from the American public and disbelief among world leaders who didn’t think it could happen in their countries.

Despite tremendous gains in knowledge of the disease, still more is needed. Curran pointed to the fact that more than 13,000 people continue to die from AIDS each year in the United States. A vaccine is still not available, and, on top of the cost, some of the drugs used to treat HIV can be toxic to many patients.

“You have to keep educating people, so they can understand the risks and are empowered to do something about it. You need to know what the risks are and how to avoid them, and public health plays a big role in that process,” Curran said.

Brandt said Curran’s work and accomplishments were critical in understanding risk factors and transmission of HIV, and advancing the science of infectious disease. Yet, Curran remains humble.

“He doesn’t do things for glory. He does things because they are the right thing to do,” Brandt said. “The world is a better place with Jim Curran in it.”
Roy Oman knew that to understand how to prevent risky behavior in teens, researchers couldn’t just study one teenager – they had to follow more than 1,000.

Oman, Ph.D., a professor at the OU College of Public Health is principal investigator on the Youth Asset Study. The study focuses on how assets, such as peer role models, family communication or volunteer service, may cause teens to avoid risky behavior such as drug and alcohol use, violence and sexual activity.

The study, funded by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, includes interviews with 1,100 teenagers, ages 12 to 17, and their parents in the Oklahoma City area. Oman’s team is following the teens for five years. He said the study focuses on positive attributes or assets, and the community from which the teens come. They also are examining the subjects’ environment, including schools and neighborhoods.

“The whole idea is not just to focus on the youths,” Oman said. “What we’re trying to do is look at the broader perspective.”

Oman’s research team at the College of Public Health includes Sara Vesely, Ph.D., Cheryl Aspy, Ph.D., Eleni Tolma, Ph.D., and Janene Fluhr, M.S.

They began the study by identifying neighborhoods that represent a variety of racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds with data from the 2000 Census. The team knocked on every door to sign up participants and conduct in-home interviews using laptops. While one researcher interviewed a parent, another spoke with their teenage child. For more personal questions about risky behaviors, teens themselves used the laptops to report answers.

The team of researchers has published more than 20 peer-reviewed articles from the data to date. Oman said he is most proud of the study’s high retention rate of participants. The YAS longitudinal study started in 2003 and 98 percent of the teenagers and their families still follow up with researchers. He credits that retention success to the project’s community partner, the Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy.

It was the idea of using this sort of large ecological model that drew Oman to Oklahoma 12 years ago. Oman is a native of Washington state and lived along the West Coast. He said work at the OU College of Public Health brought to the forefront the idea of focusing on the big picture instead of only the individual.

In addition to the Youth Asset Study, Oman teaches courses ranging from the introductory course for health promotion sciences to doctoral-level classes.

“I enjoy teaching,” Oman said. “It’s a change of pace from research. You use different skills. It’s almost like a different job in some ways.”

Oman clearly excels at both facets of his job. Recently, he was named the Edith Kinney Gaylord Presidential Professor. The Presidential Professor designation is given to only a few professors each year who exemplify the ideals of a scholar through teaching, research and mentoring students.

“The College of Public Health is fortunate to have Dr. Oman,” said Gary Raskob, dean of the college. “Not only is he conducting cutting-edge research in a new and exciting field, but he also is an outstanding and passionate professor.”
Graduates from the OU College of Public Health should be prepared to enter the working world not only as public health professionals, but also as role models for good health.

That was the message of convocation speaker Charles Grim, D.D.S., M.H.S.A., director of the Indian Health Service.

“Practice health, not only your profession,” Grim said. “You’re going to be role models in the community.”

With public health issues at the national forefront, Grim called the present a golden era for public health. Graduates from the OU College of Public Health joined that golden era at the college’s May 12 convocation ceremony.

Grim focused on the importance of public health and its many past gifts to humanity, including vaccinations, smoking cessation programs, safer workplaces and other public health advancements.

“You’ve chosen an honorable profession,” Grim told the graduates. “Thanks in advance for what you will do to progress the health and well-being of this nation.”

Grim also offered advice to graduates, telling them to celebrate life and always remember the goal of improved health for all people.

“In the end, it’s about people and how we affect them,” Grim said. “Your job might allow you to affect one person, a few people or a whole state or nation.”

Dean of the College of Public Health Gary Raskob introduced Grim.

“I’ve had the opportunity to work with Dr. Grim,” Raskob said. “He is one of the most dedicated and caring health professionals I know.”

Among the 90 students participating in the convocation ceremony was Kathleen Moore, M.D., who earned a master’s degree in epidemiology and biostatistics.

Moore, who also is a working physician, said she often came
to class in scrubs. While she hails from Albuquerque, N.M., and attended medical school at the University of Washington in Seattle, she said OU was the perfect destination to continue her education with a graduate degree in public health.

“OU is great. It’s one of the top schools of public health,” Moore said. “This degree will make me a better clinician. It helps up the ante.”

Graduates were presented degrees in seven areas of public health as well as Certificates of Public Health.

“The caliber of the graduates from the OU College of Public Health speaks volumes,” Grim said. “From the graduate who had served in clinics overseas to eradicate disease to one who works with a local elementary school to fight obesity, these students clearly had not only academic success, but also a strong desire to better their world. That is impressive. In the end, positive change is a key goal of public health and these students will surely be an asset to their communities and to our nation in their future careers.”

Six students graduated with a perfect 4.0 grade point average. Each department also honored a student with the Outstanding Student Award. The winner of the College of Public Health Outstanding Student Award was Amanda Cash, Dr.P.H.

“I was surprised, delighted and honored to receive such an outstanding award,” Cash said. “I couldn’t have achieved this level of success without the faculty and staff at the College of Public Health.”

“We are so proud of these graduates,” Raskob said. “I know that the public health of this nation will be improved because of their efforts.”

Charles W. Grim, D.D.S., M.H.S.A., is the director of the Indian Health Service and an assistant surgeon general. He was appointed by President Bush in August 2002 and later received unanimous Senate confirmation in July 2003.

Grim is a native of Oklahoma and a member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma. He graduated from the University of Oklahoma College of Dentistry in 1983 and began his career in the Indian Health Service with a two-year clinical assignment in Okmulgee. In addition to his dentistry degree, Grim has a master’s degree in health services administration from the University of Michigan. His wife, Gloria, is the medical director of the Cherokee Nation.

The Indian Health Service is a nationwide $4 billion health delivery program with more than 15,800 employees. It is the principal federal health care provider and health advocate for Indian people. It provides preventive, curative and community health care to about 1.8 million American Indians and Alaska Natives throughout the United States. It is composed of 12 administrative Area (regional) Offices, which oversee local hospitals and clinics.
The College of Public Health student team members are (clockwise from left): Jessica Hill, Sommer Bartholomew, Adam McGann, Parul Ajmani and Tina Chase.
When a team of five College of Public Health students made it to the final rounds of the prestigious Donald W. Reynolds Governor’s Cup competition, they had already won something better than first place.

“This competition is giving students experience in both spoken and written word,” said the team’s faculty adviser Steve Mattachione, J.D., C.P.A. “Yes, we love to win, but this is about education.”

After 20 years in the health care industry, most recently as a hospital chief financial officer, Mattachione joined the College of Public Health as an executive in residence to offer business insight to students and staff. He said one of his goals was to get more students involved in competitions to give them real-world experience that is hard to duplicate in the classroom.

Mattachione sent an e-mail to all master of health administration students asking for volunteers to compete. Five students — Tina Chase, Parul Ajmani, Sommer Bartholomew, Jessica Hill and Adam McGann — responded.

“I really felt that it would be a wonderful opportunity to work with some of the professors who have actually created business plans and helped start businesses in their careers,” Chase said.

Mattachione said they had a “perfect product” for their business plan – The Ginie Coder. The Ginie Coder is software developed by Dr. Andrew Gin, a neurologist who graduated from the OU College of Medicine and now serves as medical director of the neuroscience section at St. Anthony Hospital. The product assists doctors in collecting information for the billing process and organizing this information into an order Medicare recognizes.

The competition required teams to assess market need for a product and its capacity to generate revenue.

“We had a great advantage as our product actually existed, whereas some of our competitors were only concepts of products,” team member Adam McGann said. “Dr. Gin has used the program in his practice for two years and other neurologists had tested it and were favorable to it.”

While they had a great product, time was not on the team’s side. After the students volunteered and were able to meet with Dr. Gin, only eight days remained until deadline.

“In eight days we did all of the research, all of the writing and all of the graphs and turned the project in with minutes to spare from the deadline,” team leader Tina Chase said. “As master-level students, though, we are used to being given projects at the last minute and getting them done. Also, in the real-world that is how things happen.”

The team’s plan was selected as one of six finalists to go before a panel of judges.

“Presenting in front of the judges, several of whom were actual venture capitalists, was a tremendous learning opportunity for myself and the team,” McGann said. “While we give presentations in our program, nothing compares to the actual real-world experience of presenting for people who may hear and assess hundreds of product pitches a year.”

In addition to gaining valuable experience, the team won a $1,000 prize for being finalists.

“On any given day we could win or lose,” Mattachione said. “It’s about competing, and we’ve shown we have a highly competitive M.H.A. program.”
Student leadership at the OU College of Public Health plays a vital role for students in their quest for advanced training and degrees.

The No. 1 goal of the College of Public Health Student Association is to bring together hundreds of students, many non-traditional, to enhance relationships and the college experience, association President Chidindu Enwere said. “We want to meet the students’ needs. We are a forum for them,” Enwere said.

Enwere said she hopes varied activities will foster bonds between students, faculty and staff. She credits the previous student association members with making significant strides and increasing participation.

To continue the growth, Social Committee Chairman Thuan Nguyen is planning activities that range from laid-back movie nights to assisting with fund-raising activities for student stipends and scholarships.

Both Jacquelyn Skinner, secretary, and Patrick Schlecht, treasurer, said a desire to be more active on campus led them to volunteer for leadership positions with the student association.

“As I settled into the college as a new student I found the COPHSA to be an outlet for public health students to discuss ideas, address concerns, be informed and develop a sense of community on campus,” Schlecht said.

This fall, the student association also will reach out to the community.

“In regards to my specific position, I believe OUHSC should be a resource to the community as much as an educational institution,” Community Service Chair Christine Benner said. “I want to see students become more civically conscious of the city that supports them and engage in opportunities to give something back.”

The 2007-2008 OU College of Public Health Student Association officers are (from left): Social Committee Chairman Thuan Nguyen, Community Service Chairwoman Christine Benner, Vice President Sommer Bartholomew, President Chidindu Enwere, Treasurer Patrick Schlecht and Secretary Jacquelyn Skinner.

Enhancing Education through Student Leadership

OU College of Public Health Student Association
Officers 2007-2008

Chidindu Enwere
President
Age: 24
Hometown: Houston
Major: M.P.H. in General Public Health
Graduation: May 2008

Sommer Bartholomew
Vice President
Age: 23
Hometown: Oklahoma City
Major: M.H.A.
Graduation: May 2008

Patrick Schlecht
Treasurer
Age: 29
Hometown: Fargo, N.D.
Major: M.P.H. in Health Promotion Sciences
Graduation: Summer 2008

Jacquelyn Skinner
Secretary
Age: 23
Hometown: Houston
Major: M.P.H. in Epidemiology
Graduation: May 2008

Christine Benner
Community Service Chair
Age: 25
Hometown: Tulsa
Major: M.P.H. in General Public Health
Graduation: December 2008

Thuan Nguyen
Social Committee Chair
Age: 31
Hometown: Oklahoma City
Major: M.P.H. in Biostatistics
Graduation: May 2008
PUBLIC HEALTH IN ACTION

University of Oklahoma College of Public Health

Cancer Prevention
Cancer is a frightening diagnosis – a diagnosis that one in two men and one in three women will face in their lifetimes. While treating cancer is important, preventing cancer should be the ultimate goal.

Despite positive trends in five-year survival rates for three of the most common cancers – prostate, breast and colorectal – lung cancer survival rates remain poor, barely budging since 1974, according to a report by the National Cancer Institute. In light of these statistics, prevention becomes critical in the battle against lung cancer and other tobacco-related cancers.

Laura Beebe, Ph.D., of the OU College of Public Health, is striving to advance cancer prevention. Beebe was recently appointed director of the Oklahoma Tobacco Research Center – a $4 million, five-year program that is part of the new OU Cancer Institute’s Cancer Prevention and Control division.

Preventing cancer starts with simple steps like changing certain unhealthy behaviors. Beebe said the simplest way to prevent cancer is to not smoke or use tobacco products. Nearly 90 percent of lung cancers can be avoided by not smoking and 10 cancers are causally related to tobacco use, according to the Oklahoma State Health Department’s annual cancer report.

Launched in July of 2007, the Tobacco Research Center’s mission is to reduce Oklahoma’s cancer burden by linking research to existing community-based prevention programs.

“This opportunity allows us to address a significant cause of cancer and cancer-related deaths,” Beebe said. “It’s really an exciting opportunity.”

The Oklahoma Tobacco Research Center is funded from a settlement with the tobacco industry through the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust, established through a constitutional amendment approved by voters in November of 2000. Beebe said
the trust ensures the funds are used for tobacco prevention and other programs to improve health.

The center stands at the heart of such prevention efforts. Importantly, it also will have a training component. Beebe, who graduated from the OU College of Public Health (M.P.H. ’89, Ph.D. ’97), explained the center will be creating homegrown, next generation researchers in the field of cancer prevention.

“This is very forward thinking. They recognize the link between research and practice. Expanding our knowledge base is important,” Beebe said.

Oklahoma is clearly a state where further knowledge and increased prevention is not only needed, but critical. The state ranks 44th in the nation for cancer deaths, and lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths among Oklahomans.

“Oklahoma is unique in that there are a lot of opportunities to make an impact,” Beebe said.

Although our bodies may be wired with genetic or hereditary factors that we cannot change, Beebe said lifestyle factors can be altered.

In the end, she added, putting down cigarettes, walking an extra 30 minutes a day and eating the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables each day are simple steps that protect us from cancer and ultimately save lives. ■

According to the Oklahoma State Department of Health, avoiding tobacco use is the single most important step Oklahomans can take to reduce cancer risk. A free, statewide telephone line has been set up to help citizens quit. For information on counseling, nicotine replacement therapy and other quitting aides, call (800) QUIT-NOW.

Preventing Tobacco-Related Cancer

Tobacco use is the leading cause of cancer, and has been estimated to account for about 30 percent of cancer deaths in the United States. Smoking increases the risk of many types of cancer, including cancers of the lung, throat, mouth, pancreas, kidney, bladder, cervix and others. Depending on how long and how much a person smoked, the smoker’s risk of cancer can be two times to 10 times greater than a nonsmoker’s risk. Quitting smoking is critical for one’s overall health, but keeping young people from ever starting is crucial to our nation’s health. Here are some tips to help children avoid smoking and tobacco use.

Lead by example:

- Despite the impact of movies, music and television, parents can be the greatest influence in their children’s lives.
- Talk directly to children about the risks of tobacco use; if friends or relatives died from tobacco-related illnesses, let your kids know.
- If you use tobacco, you can still make a difference. Your best move, of course, is to quit. Meanwhile, don’t use tobacco in your children’s presence, don’t offer it to them, and don’t leave it where they can easily get it.

Talk to your kids early about tobacco use:

- Experts recommend talking about not smoking by age 6 and continue through their high school years. Many kids start using tobacco by age 11, and many are addicted by age 14.

Be aware of peer pressure:

- Know if your children’s friends use tobacco.
- Talk about ways to refuse tobacco.
- Discuss with kids the false glamorization of tobacco on billboards and in other media, such as movies, TV and magazines.

Support a tobacco-free community:

- Back businesses that don’t sell tobacco to kids.
- Frequent restaurants and other places that are tobacco-free.
- Advocate for tobacco-free schools and school events (i.e., parties, sporting events).
- Partner with your local tobacco prevention programs. Call your local health department or your cancer, heart or lung association to learn how you can get involved. ■

Source: National Cancer Institute and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
The OU College of Public Health and the OU Cancer Institute form a critical partnership in the state’s fight against cancer through the newly funded Oklahoma Tobacco Research Center.

“The No. 1 cause of cancer death for men and women today is lung cancer and it is directly related to tobacco use, which is a public health issue. So, if one were to look at the future for diminishing the impact of cancer in our society, one has to look at public health,” said Robert Mannel, M.D., director of the OU Cancer Institute.

Dr. Mannel said the new Oklahoma Tobacco Research Center will provide a greater ability to focus on education and research aimed at cancer prevention and control. It will take direct aim at reducing tobacco use in Oklahoma.

“Things that may work well for tobacco cessation in other parts of the country may not work well in Oklahoma. We have a high American Indian population; we have a high rural population. We need to determine what the successful strategies are in those areas,” he said.

As a researcher and clinician, Mannel knows the importance of translating research from the bench to the bedside. He sees great value in research aimed at finding better treatments and potentially a cure for cancer, but he also knows prevention is paramount.

“Clearly, our goal is to capture the cancer before it requires aggressive or surgical therapy — or prevent it all together,” Mannel said. “With appropriate public health prevention such as tobacco use prevention and cessation, obesity reduction, lifestyle changes and proper screenings, it is one of the greatest opportunities for reducing preventable death.”

An artist’s rendering shows the new OU Cancer Institute that is being built on the campus of the OU Health Sciences Center at the corner of Phillips Avenue and NE 10.

**Partnership Advances Cancer Prevention**

Diet remains one of the three biggest weapons in efforts to prevent cancer. Public health experts know the most consistent and proven diet known to reduce cancer risk is one that includes several types of fruits and vegetables, is low in fat and has limited red meat.

Ronneal Walker-Mathews, M.P.H. (’01 OU), project manager of the OU Community Networks Program at the OU College of Public Health, said such a diet can help prevent several types of cancer as well as stroke and cardiovascular disease.

The American Cancer Society’s 2006 report on nutrition and cancer recommends the following cancer-fighting dietary considerations:

- **Fruits and Vegetables** – Eat five or more servings of a variety of vegetables and fruits each day. A serving of fruit includes one banana or orange; half a cup of chopped, cooked or canned fruit; or three-fourths cup of 100 percent fruit juice. A serving of vegetables includes one cup of raw, leafy vegetables; half a cup of other cooked or raw vegetables, chopped; or three-fourths cup of 100 percent vegetable juice.

- **Grains** – Choose whole grains in place of processed (refined) grains. A serving of grains includes one slice of bread; one ounce of ready-to-eat cereal; or half a cup of cooked cereal, rice or pasta.

- **Portions** – Eat smaller portions of high-calorie foods. Be aware that “low-fat” or “nonfat” does not mean low in calories and that low-fat cakes, cookies and similar foods are often high in calories. For more information on nutrition, exercise, obesity and other factors related to cancer, go online to www.cancer.org or call (800) 227-2345 or (405) 843-9888.
With Oklahoma now leading the nation in deaths from cardiovascular disease and nearing the top in obesity and diabetes, Oklahoma Wellness Week is proving a valuable weapon in the fight to reverse these deadly trends.

The annual event has grown larger each year. The OU College of Public Health joined with thousands of Oklahomans participating in Oklahoma Wellness Week 2007, making it the most successful yet.

In addition to its participation in the growing Health and Wellness Fair in downtown Oklahoma City, the college participated in Walk This Weigh, an event designed to promote health and wellness through walking. The college also hosted four Public Health Grand Rounds that featured health experts.

Oklahoma Wellness Week 2007 was the third installment of an event that grew out of efforts to improve state health outcomes by members of Central Oklahoma Turning Point, a United Way Partner.

“We want people to understand what they can do to live healthier lives,” said Jackie Jones, executive director of Central Oklahoma Turning Point.

The information provided during Oklahoma Wellness Week 2007 is included in a new guide called “Strong and Healthy Oklahoma.” For a copy of the informative 148-page guide, go online to www.healthyoklahomans.org and click on General Health Resources.
At the beginning of 1976, Stephen Hanson was a 24-year-old recent college graduate with long hair, a mustache and two children under age 4. He was an Iowa boy who sought the path to his future at the University of Oklahoma.

He enrolled at the OU College of Public Health, where he learned about health care planning and management. He earned a master of public health degree and is now—after more than 30 years in the health care industry—the senior executive vice president for system alignment and performance at Texas Health Resources in Arlington, Texas. THR is the largest health system in North Texas with revenue of more than $2 billion.

“When we looked around the country, I didn’t feel compelled to move to Los Angeles or Boston or places like that, and I wanted to be in a strong health planning program. So, I narrowed my search very rapidly to OU and Tulane. I ended up coming here mainly because of Dr. Charles Campbell. He was one of the foremost supporters of health planning in the country, and his presence here attracted me. So I started in January 1976 and really enjoyed it,” Hanson said.

Nearly 30 years later, Hanson returned to Oklahoma to talk about the current state of health and how his education at OU prepared him for his journey through public health management.

Hanson reminisced about the many things that have changed since the mid-1970s, when he graduated from OU, including the addition of FM radio, the death of disco, gymnast Nadia Comaneci, whom he watched in the 1976 Olympics, and the shift from the Big 8 to the Big 12 Conference. Hanson watched a lot of football and the then new head football coach Barry Switzer.

“I don’t know if you ever heard of him,” he joked with students.

The one thing that hasn’t changed, Hanson said, is the crisis with health care that presents the same challenges today as in the 1970s.

“There was a big problem back then with focusing on the whole person, providing holistic care. There was a big problem with health care costs. Some people called it a health care cost crisis. There was concern about the percentage of people in this country who were uninsured. There was a big debate ‘Is health care a privilege or a right?’ There was a need for more focus on prevention—a lot of concern that we’re spending way too much money on acute care,” Hanson said.

He quipped, “Aren’t you glad we’ve solved all those in the last 30 years?”

Hanson now works with 13 hospitals in northern Texas to improve cooperation while finding ways to provide cost-effective care for patients. He is still striving toward his goal of holistic, affordable health care for everyone.

“Then as today, I am on fire to transform health care. That’s the one message I have for you—you have chosen a great field whether you are just entering it or you have been in it as I have,” Hanson said. “This is probably the best field you could have chosen.”

Before leaving OU on his latest visit, Hanson offered a few tips for graduates, stressing they should keep their integrity, make time to mentor and volunteer, stay connected to patients and doctors, and finally, “hang that diploma proudly.”

“Every job I’ve had, the very first thing you see is the diploma from OU—December 23, 1976. Master of Public Health. It’s right there and I’m very proud of that.”

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Join the College of Public Health Alumni Association

For information about upcoming Alumni Association events, click on the Alumni tab at www.coph.ouhsc.edu/coph. For other membership information, contact Vivian Glore at (405) 271-2700 or by e-mail at Vivian-Glore@ouhsc.edu.
While most companies focus on gains, The NORDAM Group in Tulsa focused on losses with impressive results for both its bottom line and employees’ waistlines.

NORDAM Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Ken Lackey told an audience at Public Health Grand Rounds he knew it was not the usual approach, but the standard cost-cutting tactics had already failed.

When NORDAM’s health care costs skyrocketed to more than $14 million a year, company executives did what many others have done. They reduced benefits and changed insurance carriers. Yet, neither change produced the expected results.

In 2005, they decided to try something different—a corporate wellness program. Within a year, NORDAM’s health care costs dropped about $500 per employee, saving NORDAM nearly $5 million. It marked the first decrease in medical and pharmacy costs in a decade for the company.

Lackey, a member of the OU College of Public Health Advisory Board, said company leaders chose to focus on reducing obesity as a primary target.

“Obesity raises health care costs 36 percent, and medication costs 77 percent. Between 2000 and 2005 we saw health care costs go up 54 percent in the United States. People are saying it’s going to go up another 7 to 10 percent next year,” Lackey said.

Lackey feels confident that will not be the trend at NORDAM, where the wellness program includes:

- A tobacco-free campus and tobacco cessation workshops;
- A weight-loss program;
- Health information and screenings;
- Flu shots;
- Plans to build walking paths;
- Participation in a corporate 5K walk;
- Availability of healthful snacks for employees;
- Company-sponsored sports activities such as a softball team.

In the weight-loss program alone, employees lost nearly 670 pounds. Such losses also have produced rewards for employees through NORDAM’s wellness contract. The contract offers workers up to $300 in rebates for participation in the program.

Next year, NORDAM will add health fairs, executive physicals and a corporate intranet site featuring health information and testimonials from employees on the personal successes they have achieved through the wellness program.

“We wanted to help our employees take control of their lives,” Lackey said. “I don’t think there is anything that we can do that is any more meaningful than to add a few years to their life, and make living their life more enjoyable.”

**OU College of Public Health**  
2007-2008 Advisory Board

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Dick Rush
CCE, President and Chief Executive Officer, The State Chamber

“The State Chamber values a strong advisory relationship with the OU College of Public Health because it provides better understanding on both sides of the pivot point between the business community and the public health community. Each area of focus increases the quality of life of Oklahoma citizens. The State Chamber strives for a healthy economy, and a healthy economy requires stimulating and dependable laws as well as a healthy workforce. We value the opportunity to increase understanding between leaders of both communities.”

Kim Holland
Commissioner, Oklahoma Insurance Department

“Considering the high rate of uninsured Oklahomans who are not getting proper medical treatment or preventative check-ups, it is imperative that insurance and business leaders work with the OU College of Public Health to map a course that will improve health outcomes and provide access to care for all Oklahomans. I am honored to be a member of the college’s Advisory Board to work toward that goal.”

Michael Anderson
President, Presbyterian Health Foundation

“The College of Public Health is the vanguard of public health issues that include bioterrorism and prevention of disease for Oklahoma. An integrated and systemic collaboration between health professionals and COPH is essential to reduce the deaths from a bioterrorist attack, and as the case of the American potentially spreading deadly tuberculosis via international flights earlier this year suggests, collaboration between public health, policy and law enforcement is essential to the future health of the nation, and nations of the world.”
Harvey Fineberg, president of the Institute of Medicine, said many health care facilities in the United States provide quality services, access to care for everyone or treatment at a reasonable cost. But, he said, delivering all three at the same time is the formidable task facing leaders as they reform the American health care system.

“The trick and the great challenge at this time in the United States is how you accomplish all three,” he said.

Fineberg closed this year’s spring series of Public Health Grand Rounds with a presentation on “Efficiency and Value in Health Care.”

Fineberg, M.D., M.P.H., spent 13 years as the dean of the Harvard School of Public Health and four years as provost before joining the Institute of Medicine. He said leaders face a significant challenge to overcome society’s strong resistance to change as they move from a treatment-based system to prevention.

During the shift, public health professionals and policy makers must strive to decrease the number of uninsured Americans. Fineberg said patients without medical insurance take fewer preventive steps, receive later care for disease and often file for bankruptcy because of overwhelming medical costs.

“The consequences for the community result from illness, lost days of work and excess demand on emergency rooms for routine care,” Fineberg said. “We’re doing it in a kind of silly way when we don’t provide the basic insurance that people need.”

Those who are uninsured and even patients with insurance often fail to see their doctor for periodic health exams and screenings until a health problem arises.

“We’re all more motivated to do something when we have to than when we should,” he said.

Clinical preventive services such as cholesterol and blood pressure checks are key to reducing diseases that many times are present without symptoms.

“Some of these preventives are actually long-term preventives. The reason cigarettes kill so many people is that when you start smoking, you don’t drop dead immediately. It can take years before the consequences are fully realized. So, there are a lot of factors that together make the logic of prevention not translated into reality.”

Fineberg said prevention and the cost of health care are two important elements in making health care more efficient. He and others at the Institute of Medicine are suggesting multiple strategies to improve efficiency, including no deductible for preventive services, optimized workflow and production of uniform insurance forms.

“We can get real efficiency and value by doing the right care for the right patient at the right time, in a way that makes best use of the available resources,” Fineberg said. “It’s a big challenge and there’s a lot to do, but our patients deserve no less.”
Dr. James Marks, M.D., M.P.H., senior vice president and director of the Health Group for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, talks to students, faculty, staff and other health professionals during his presentation at Public Health Grand Rounds.

A lot has changed in Oklahoma and in public health since Dr. James Marks first visited Oklahoma in the 1980s. “We have had growth and success in many areas of public health. We’ve had special attention brought to public health due to attacks on Sept. 11 and Hurricane Katrina – both of those reminded people about how important the work we do during a time of crisis can be,” said Marks, M.D., M.P.H.

Dr. Marks, who shared his thoughts during Public Health Grand Rounds, is senior vice president and director of the Health Group for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The foundation is the nation’s largest philanthropic group devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans.

Before joining the foundation in December 2004, Dr. Marks already had a distinguished career as director of the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. He had spent 25 years working on ways to address obesity, reduce tobacco use and prevent diseases such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes, among other initiatives.

On his visit to the college, Marks spoke about public health promotion, disaster preparedness, skyrocketing health care costs, obesity, the need for cooperation among public health agencies and instability in funding. He also spoke of the need for greater awareness of the importance of public health. Marks cited one poll in which nine of 10 people couldn’t come up with an answer to the question “What does public health mean to you?”

“The public doesn’t know why public health should matter to them,” Marks said. “If they don’t know, they won’t be there by our side to fight for resources.”

Marks and others at RWJF are concerned about the current state of health in this country and the availability of high-quality, cost-effective health care. They are working to find effective and innovative ways to help rectify difficult health issues facing Americans.

“We can’t afford to hope that more expensive technology and more intensive treatment will solve these problems. They won’t,” Marks said. “What we need is not more treatment. What we need is less disease. Public health’s role is at the core of this.”

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation provides about $450 million in grants and contracts each year to support programs and projects that improve health and health care in the United States. The foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change.

Mark Raskob, dean of the OU College of Public Health, introduces Dr. James Marks, M.D., M.P.H., senior vice president and director of the Health Group for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Marks was a featured speaker at Public Health Grand Rounds.

“Completing my Dr.P.H. degree at OU was a major test and achievement for me. It was definitely worth the effort, patience and perseverance. I believe some of these qualities along with my public health practice and research experience allowed me to be a competitive applicant for the position at RWJF,” Brewer said.

Brewer returned to Oklahoma in the spring with Dr. Marks, M.D., M.P.H., senior vice president and director of the Health Group for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Marks was a featured speaker at Public Health Grand Rounds.

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R ussell Brewer credits the perseverance, confidence and education he received at the OU College of Public Health for the many job offers he garnered, including his current position as a program associate at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in Princeton, N.J.

Brewer earned his M.P.H. and Dr.P.H. at the college while working full time, first at the state Health Department and then at the health department in Cleveland County.

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Oman named Edith Kinney Gaylord Presidential Professor

Roy F. Oman, Ph.D., was named Edith Kinney Gaylord Presidential Professor. Oman received the award for excelling in his professional activities at the OU Health Sciences Center and for mentoring and inspiring his students by sharing his knowledge and experiences. Presidential Professorships are awarded each year to only a handful of professors who exemplify the ideals of a scholar through their accomplishments in teaching and research, and in service to the community. Oman’s research interests include youth development, particularly the different determinants of participation in physical activity. He is a professor in health promotion sciences.

Henderson Promoted to Professor

J. Neil Henderson, Ph.D., has been promoted to professor. Henderson, a member of the Choctaw Nation, and co-investigator Carson Henderson, Ph.D., M.P.H., R.N., are studying ways to reduce health disparities, particularly for American Indians and other minority populations in Oklahoma. The research, which received a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, focuses on diabetes, dementia and Alzheimer’s disease.

Regens named President’s Associates Presidential Professor

James L. Regens, Ph.D., was named President’s Associates Presidential Professor. The University of Oklahoma awards this honor to outstanding faculty in recognition of their meeting the highest standards of excellence in teaching and scholarship. Regens is the associate dean for research in the College of Public Health and the founding director of the Center for Biosecurity Research at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center. He is a professor of occupational and environmental health and an adjunct professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences. His research focuses on chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threat countermeasures; the transmission dynamics of infectious diseases; and environmental health.

National award for Lee

Elisa T. Lee, Ph.D., was honored with the 2006 National Faculty Research Role Model Award. The award was given by Minority Access Inc., a Washington D.C.-based national organization that collaborates with the minority office of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to promote minority health and reduce health disparity. Lee is a George Lynn Cross Research Professor of Biostatistics and Epidemiology and the director of the Center for American Indian Health Research.
Learning about a graduate who’s responsible for overseeing aviation safety in 48 African countries or being told by another alumnus of her upcoming deployment to Iraq is what makes work interesting for Assistant Dean Vivian Glore.

Glore joined the college in March 2005 as the assistant dean for alumni affairs and community relations. She enjoys the position, which allows her to build and maintain connections between the college and its graduates, wherever they are throughout the world.

“With e-mail, there’s really no reason why an alumnus anywhere across the nation or around the world should feel isolated,” she said. “The work I do is focused on people and relationships.”

Glore also works with Dean Gary Raskob to foster partnerships between the college and community leaders, including members of the college’s Advisory Board.

“We know the important role this college plays in promoting and furthering public health issues in the community, and it is a pleasure to have such a wonderful professional assisting us in these efforts,” Raskob said.

Glore earned a bachelor’s degree in liberal studies and a master’s degree in human relations, both from OU, while raising her children: Jennifer, 31, an attorney in Portland, Ore.; Cathleen, 28, a special events coordinator in Los Angeles; and Aaron, 24, who joined the U.S. Navy last fall and is currently stationed at Point Mugu, Calif.

Her husband, Stephen Glore, also works in the College of Health Building as an associate professor of nutritional sciences in the College of Allied Health.

When Glore is not working to build and strengthen relationships between the college, the community and former students, she loves to read, garden and cook. She also enjoys playing golf, a sport she picked up six years ago when she met her husband.

“Steve has a 3 handicap and my goal is to not be an embarrassment!”

Before coming to the OU Health Sciences Center, Glore worked on the Norman campus for 15 years, the last eight of which were in the College of Arts and Sciences as director for outreach.
CLASS NOTES

2000

Dunagan, Abbie ('07 M.H.A.), works as a product operations manufacturing manager at the Oklahoma Blood Institute in Oklahoma City.

Espinoza, Raffaella ('06 M.P.H. Epidemiology), completed a one-year fellowship with the Field Services and Evaluation Branch, Division of TB Elimination, at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. She has accepted a position in the New York City Health Department, bureau of TB.

Finley, John Robert ('02 M.P.H.), serves as the associate vice chancellor for compliance at the University of Kansas Medical Center. Finley joined the University of Kansas from a position at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, where he worked in the office of the commissioner.

Fisher, Kimberly ('07 M.S. Epidemiology), is a clinical instructor physical therapist at the OU College of Medicine.

Gatei, Catherine ('07 M.P.H.), is a physical therapist at St. Anthony Hospital in Oklahoma City.

Glasgow, Trent A. ('02 M.P.H.), is a second-year law student at the University of Tulsa College of Law, emphasizing his curriculum in health law topics. He expects to graduate in May 2008. Glasgow also worked as a legal intern for Pierce, Couch, Hendrickson, Baysinger and Green during 2007.

Norton, Barbara L. ('06 Dr.P.H., '98 M.P.H.), is currently an assistant professor of research at the OU College of Public Health.

Petty, Carla ('04 M.P.H.), works as a licensing manager for the Oklahoma Board of Nursing. She has been a certified professional in health care quality since 1995 and is a certified health promotion director.

1990

Cross, Pamela S. ('93 M.P.H.), is the project coordinator at the Health Alliance for the Uninsured, a new collaborative effort to provide health care for the uninsured in Oklahoma.


Shaver, Kathleen ('94 M.P.H. Environmental Management), is a senior manager for global sustainability for the toy company Mattel in El Segundo, Calif.

1980

Burgess, Cathleen ('88 M.P.H.), is a chief nurse at Fort Bliss, Texas. She was deployed to Iraq in July.

Keane, Moira D. ('82 M.P.H.), was promoted to a Federal Aviation Administration senior representative in Sub-Saharan Africa in March. She is the only FAA representative on the continent of Africa. Her job is promoting safety of air navigation in 48 African countries.

Mumford, Richard L. Jr. ('89 M.P.H.), serves as executive director of the Langston Community Development Corporation and director of the office of Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action at Langston University. He also serves as an adjunct instructor in the School of Business at Langston University.

Verma, Rajeev ('84 M.P.H.), works for the Permanente Medical Group in Fresno, Calif., as a staff pediatrician and assistant chief of pediatrics and assistant chief of quality.

Weber, Andrew ('80 M.P.H.), is leading the Johnson & Johnson Access and Affordability programs in New Jersey.

1970

Kerr, Bernard J. Jr. ('74 M.P.H.), is an associate professor in Central Michigan University’s Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow College of Health Professions in Mount Pleasant, Mich. Prior to joining CMU, Kerr was responsible for a $1.5 million budget and a staff of 13 professionals engaged in medical information systems design, development and deployment.

Patterson, Col. John H. ('74 M.P.H. Health Administration), retired from the U.S. Army in 2000. He served as chief of the Department of Psychiatry at Brooke Army Medical Center in Houston. He now lives in San Antonio and provides services as a psychiatric research consultant.

In Memoriam

Haug, Norman ('72 M.D., M.P.H.), died May 6. He was a doctor in Del Norte, Colo., and served as coroner and jail physician. He spearheaded the drive to open a $10 million hospital after the Del Norte hospital closed. He was the hospital administrator for the new institution, the Rio Grande Hospital, until the time of his death. The National Rural Health Association also named Haug the rural health practitioner of the year in 2003.

Watt, Jaimie ('05 M.P.H.), died May 17 at age 63. She was a health educator for the Oklahoma State Department of Health. Jaimie served on the COPHAA executive board as a district representative and was a familiar face at college events.

Keep in touch! Just send an e-mail to Vivian-Glore@ouhsc.edu. We’d love to publish your news in our next issue of OU Public Health.
Public Health Calendar of Events for Fall 2007

September

13
College of Public Health Alumni Association Quarterly Program.

Public Health Grand Rounds, featuring William Geerts, M.D., professor, Department of Medicine, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, University of Toronto, Ontario.

20
Public Health Grand Rounds, “Evidence Based Medicine: A Paradigm for Improving Patient Care and Public Health Policy,” featuring Gordon Guyatt, M.D., professor, Department of Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics and Department of Medicine, McMaster University, Hamilton, Canada.

October

4

8 through 11
College Phone-A-Thon.

11

16

October

30
Public Health Grand Rounds, “The Rising Costs of Healthcare: Causes and Solutions,” featuring Kenneth Thorpe, Ph.D., Robert Wood Johnson Professor and chairman, Department of Health Policy and Management, Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University, Atlanta.

November

3 through 7
American Public Health Association/Association of Schools of Public Health – Washington, D.C.

15

19
National Public Health Thank You Day.

December

1
World AIDS Day event.

March

12 through 14
Oklahoma Public Health Association at the Marriott Southern Hills in Tulsa.

29
Oklahoma Wellness Week Health Fair, Bricktown, Oklahoma City.

April

7 through 11
National Public Health Week.