Years of Progress

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

Dear Alumni and Friends:

2009 marks the 40th anniversary of the OU College of Public Health becoming an accredited school of public health.

With this issue, we celebrate this key milestone in our history, and the many accomplishments of this college through the years – accomplishments built upon a foundation of excellence laid four decades ago by true visionaries in this state. They recognized, long before many others, the critical role a school of public health plays in protecting health and preventing disease, injury and disability.

Accreditation certifies that a school has achieved a high standard of quality in its missions of education, research and service. In 1969, there were few accredited schools of public health. Today, America’s 40 accredited schools of public health include more than 9,600 faculty and 22,000 students, and graduate more than 7,300 a year.

Public health professionals are a diverse, multidisciplinary group, from epidemiologists and biostatisticians to environmental health specialists, policy experts and more. All share a common grounding in the core disciplines of public health, and a dedication to prevention of disease as the most effective way to protect and maintain the health of a population.

This college is privileged to carry on a legacy of leadership in public health. We are devoted to training the next generation of public health practitioners, research scientists and health policy makers. We are focused on furthering efforts to combat environmental factors that negatively impact health; committed to ensuring communities are well prepared to respond to public health emergencies; and dedicated to developing more effective prevention strategies.

Oklahoma and America need strong public health leadership to meet the many challenges to the health of our citizens. We owe the founders of our college our sincerest gratitude, and our commitment to carry on their vision.

Sincerely,

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

President’s Message

Public health education, research and policy will continue to play a critical role in the future health status of Oklahoma and the nation. At the University of Oklahoma, we are proud of the leadership role our College of Public Health continues to provide on a local and national level.

At the college, funding for public health research has more than tripled. Our faculty are honored educators training the next generation of public health professionals. They also are valued advisers at the state and national level, bringing important insights, knowledge and information to critical discussions while helping to protect and improve health.

As the OU College of Public Health marks the 40th anniversary of its accreditation, I would like to personally congratulate the dean, faculty, staff and students on the tremendous strides they have made toward furthering our long-standing tradition of excellence.

Sincerely,

David L. Boren
President, The University of Oklahoma

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Kenneth Warner, Ph.D., dean, University of Michigan School of Public Health

“Tobacco Control Policy: Results and Future Directions for Public Health”

“Since 1964 at least 5 million premature deaths have been averted in the United States as a consequence of campaign-induced decisions to quit smoking or not to start. I would argue that this is the greatest public health success story of the last half-century. But, here’s the other side of the story – smoking continues to be the greatest remaining burden of preventable death and disease in our society.”

C. Ross Anthony, Ph.D., co-director, RAND Center for Domestic and International Health Security

“Public Health: A Key Vehicle in U.S. Foreign Policy”

“The United States is still a world leader in health and in public health, and we ought to use that to engage with people in very constructive ways that are in our best interests. There’s an awful lot that can be done for very little money.”

R. Murali Krishna, M.D., chairman, Health Alliance for the Uninsured

“Health Alliance for the Uninsured”

“We have almost one-fifth of our population really not having any insurance. And it is a crisis. But it does not appear like a crisis as a community until we look at the numbers and look at the people and see what’s happening.”

Terri White, commissioner, Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

“Making Recovery a Reality for Oklahomans: Prevention, Early Intervention and Treatment of Mental Illness and Addiction”

“Access to care is vital. Ongoing mental health and substance abuse treatment, particularly prevention and early intervention efforts, are integral to our overall health. Oklahomans are suffering because of missed opportunities for prevention and early identification.”
The only way to change the nation’s poor health outcomes and avoid a health care crisis is to “redefine the unacceptable,” said public health leader James Curran during Public Health Grand Rounds.

Curran’s presentation was the first in honor of Oklahoma’s Edward N. Brandt Jr., M.D. He got to know Brandt while working as the epidemiologist at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention assigned to tackle the AIDS crisis at the federal level in the 1980s. Brandt was an assistant secretary of health.

Curran, M.D., M.P.H., who is now dean of the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University in Atlanta, spoke on leadership and the dire need for guidance through a health system that is unsustainable in its current form.

“We must constantly redefine the unacceptable to improve public health. Do not accept the status quo,” he said.

In particular, Curran said leaders must focus on and promote primary prevention instead of the continued focus on treatment of established chronic disease. Primary prevention costs less, but has not yet become a priority in the deployment of national resources. Only 3 cents of every health care dollar is spent on prevention.

Curran said while public health policies and professionals have made significant strides, including vaccinations, safer food and water, a decline in cardiovascular disease and recognition of tobacco as a hazard, there are difficult problems looming that cannot be addressed adequately with the status quo.

To help in this effort, the OU College of Public Health and others are training the next generation of leaders to be poised for change.

With nearly 6,000 American youth under age 21 dying each year as a direct result of underage drinking, Rear Adm. Steven Galson, acting U.S. Surgeon General, said his personal mission is to solve the problem through prevention.

Dr. Galson presented his “Call to Action” at a recent Public Health Grand Rounds at the OU College of Public Health.

“Underage drinking is not a harmless rite of passage,” he stressed. “It is a leading cause of accidents. It promotes impulsive behavior and risk-taking. It results in hurt; it results in death; and it has to be stopped.”

The issue is critical nationally and for Oklahoma in particular, Galson said. Most of the deaths directly attributable to underage drinking are from vehicle crashes, homicides and suicides while under the influence. Hundreds more are injured.

The cost of treatment programs, accidents, insurance, medical bills and other expenses related to underage drinking is $778 million in Oklahoma. That’s $2,100 for each youth in this state, Galson said.

To end the problem, Galson recommends expanded prevention programs by public health professionals at the national, state and local levels. Greater involvement in prevention activities also is needed by the general public, especially student groups.
The year was 2001. Terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center shone new light on the importance of preparedness and protection in the event of disasters, both natural and manmade. The world faced potential threats from pandemic flu and SARS. At the same time, it was increasingly evident that prevention was needed to help solve the crisis of rapidly rising health care costs due to the increasing burden of disease in this nation.

The role of public health garnered the spotlight and public health professionals were now at the forefront of worldwide discussions about preventing disease and protecting citizens from bioterrorism, environmental and other threats to overall public health.

On this backdrop of increased public health awareness, Gary Raskob, Ph.D., became the newest dean of the OU College of Public Health. He had joined the faculty at the college 11 years earlier as an instructor in epidemiology. A native of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, Raskob also had served as associate vice president for clinical research at the OU Health Sciences Center.

Since Raskob became dean in 2002, the college has continued to grow and evolve. It now embraces important Core Values that include excellence, integrity, public service, health equity, responsibility and partnership.

Several critical partnerships have been formed with community and health agency leaders. New partnerships now exist with several tribal leaders and American Indian tribes in Oklahoma, who face a disproportionate share of the burden of poor health outcomes. Tribal leaders also are part of the new College of Public Health Advisory Board that brings together public health professionals, business leaders and community leaders from around Oklahoma to discuss practical and necessary solutions for improved health.

“Partnership is critical if we are to truly impact public health,” Raskob said. “With key stakeholders who share our vision of protecting and improving public health sharing in open discussion, we move closer daily to advancing the overall goals of this college, this state and the nation as they pertain to overall health.”

A five-year Strategic Plan was implemented in recent years. It includes critical fundraising objectives, ongoing efforts to attract some of the best public health faculty and experts in the nation through increased endowments, enhancing recognition on the national level, resolving health disparities and adding new degree tracks and courses to broaden education opportunities for the next generation of public health professionals.

The college currently offers programs leading to master’s and doctoral degrees in each of the core disciplines of epidemiology, biostatistics, environmental health, health policy and administration and the health promotion sciences. The college’s alumni are among those charged with preventing and responding effectively to public health issues related to the growing consequences of bioterrorism, emerging infectious diseases such as SARS and pandemic influenza, and disease following natural disasters.

“Our team of faculty, staff and students at the College of Public Health is facing a tremendous challenge and a tremendous opportunity to drastically change the health landscape in our communities and improve quality of life,” Raskob said. “It’s an honor to lead our college and its excellent faculty as we continue our quest to improve health in the 21st century.”
SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES
Convocation 2008 marked both an ending and a new beginning for graduates from the OU College of Public Health.

“Our greatest opportunity to fulfill the promise of life, liberty, happiness and prosperity – and a better Oklahoma – will come from serious and meaningful devotion to improving our public’s health,” Oklahoma Insurance Commissioner Kim Holland told new graduates, their families and friends. Her address was filled with inspiration, but also focused on the very real public health challenges facing the state and nation.

Holland encouraged the graduates to make the “public” in public health more personal by connecting real faces and stories with their work.

“Go home and love your family, then your neighbor, then the world. Name us and claim us and know our story, because we — all of us — are the public.”

Proud families listened and looked on as their loved ones were honored for their accomplishments. Graduate Marguerite Nguyen, M.P.H., said she was pleased her family and friends were able to attend because the convocation helped them understand her passion for public health.

“I am proud to be surrounded by such talented colleagues from all facets of life,” Nguyen said. “This is what I love about public health; it helps to unite individuals with various educational and professional backgrounds through a shared interest in promoting the health of a population.”
Like many of this year’s graduates, Nguyen considers her master’s degree in public health a valuable asset for her future plans, which include attending the OU College of Medicine.

“My M.P.H. has opened up numerous opportunities. I am currently working as an intern for the American Indian Diabetes Prevention Center. It is such a rewarding feeling to work toward reducing health disparities in Oklahoma populations,” Nguyen said.

Eighty-nine students received master’s degrees in public health sciences. Four students earned doctoral degrees. ■
It would be 13 years before Nguyen saw his father and siblings again when they reunited in the United States. While the family made the most of their time together, their struggles were not over. They lost their home in the May 3, 1999, tornado that swept across Moore, and lung cancer led to the untimely death of Nguyen’s father.

Yet, in the midst of challenges to which others may have succumbed, this 32-year-old discovered an inner strength to go on and a passion that led him to pursue a career in public health and prevention research.

“My father passed away in 2001 from lung cancer. I want to make an impact on prevention and cancer, and help patients like my father know what they can do,” Nguyen said.

Nguyen earned his master’s degree in biostatistics in May at the OU College of Public Health. The experience proved so rewarding that he plans to earn a doctoral degree in epidemiology.

Nguyen’s interest in prevention research began in high school when he was selected as a Summer Scholar at the University of Oklahoma Norman campus through a program by the Oklahoma Regents for Higher Education and the National Science Foundation. During rotations from lab to lab, he had an opportunity to work with OU’s Bruce Roe, Ph.D., a leading biochemist on the Human Genome Project that mapped the first human genome.

Nguyen realized he could combine his skills in math with the analysis needed for research and genetics to create a career that would meet his goals. While attending the OU College of Public Health, he plans to continue working in the laboratory of Patrick Gaffney, M.D., at the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation.

“By getting a public health degree, it helps bridge the gap and makes me more well-rounded,” he said. “I’ve been through a lot, but hopefully with my focus on prevention, I can use my experience to make a difference.”
Public Health
Who better understands the needs and goals of students at the OU College of Public Health than students themselves? That’s why the college’s student association is so important. Its unique role is to enhance relationships and the experience among public health students, the faculty and the OU Health Sciences Center in general.

“Our goals for the student association are to enrich the experience for students at the OU College of Public Health by creating a social network and by working with faculty and staff members at the college,” student association President Katie Popp said.

Because there are so many students from different backgrounds at the college, a goal of the student association is to increase involvement and foster a sense of community among all public health students.

“I joined the student association because I wanted to serve my classmates and become more connected with the college and my experience here,” said Ryan Webb, treasurer.

By working closely with the administration, the student association hopes to share the students’ collective voice with OU College of Public Health faculty and staff members. The group also wants to help students understand their academic and professional options now and in the future.

“One of my goals for this year is to give anyone interested in the programs at COPH a better understanding of the careers available with each individual track and to also incorporate examples of positions and salaries that recent graduates have obtained,” Webb said.

### OU College of Public Health Student Association Officers 2008-2009

- **Katie Popp**
  - President
  - Age: 37
  - Hometown: Billings, Mont.
  - Major: M.P.H. Biostatistics and Epidemiology
  - Graduation: May 2010

- **Ola Sobogun**
  - Secretary
  - Age: 38
  - Hometown: Lagos, Nigeria
  - Major: M.P.H. Epidemiology
  - Graduation: May 2009

- **Tega Oteri**
  - Vice President
  - Age: 22
  - Hometown: Salt Lake City
  - Major: Master’s in Health Administration
  - Graduation: May 2009

- **Injeoma Anyibgo**
  - Social Committee Chair
  - Age: 24
  - Hometown: Houston/Lagos, Nigeria
  - Major: M.P.H. Biostatistics and Epidemiology
  - Graduation: December 2009

- **Ryan Webb**
  - Treasurer
  - Age: 24
  - Hometown: Guthrie
  - Major: M.P.H. Biostatistics and Epidemiology
  - Graduation: May 2010

- **Alissa Stinnett, R.N.**
  - Community Service Chair
  - Age: 26
  - Hometown: Kingfisher
  - Major: M.P.H. Health Promotion Sciences
  - Graduation: May 2010
In the late 1960s, a small group of visionaries at the OU Health Sciences Center had an idea. Born out of financial necessity and the foresight to see the future of Oklahoma’s health, the group decided to push for a College of Public Health.

Until then, portions of public health had been passed from one OU college to another in Norman and Oklahoma City as a preventive arm of medicine or engineering.

Led by William Schottstaedt, M.D., and Gordon Deckert, M.D., from the School of Medicine, the group organized a plan for the new college and its departments. They had a vision of what they wanted a college of public health to be. Their idea became official in 1967 when the School of Health was activated.

Two years later, in 1969, the school earned full accreditation from the American Public Health Association, becoming the first and only accredited school of public health in Oklahoma. The college celebrates its 40th anniversary of accreditation in 2009.

The school was renamed the College of Health in 1972 with Schottstaedt serving as its first dean. The college became an independent college of public health in the early 1980s.

“Back then, health department personnel who wished advancement at their work or new opportunities had to go to public health schools at Tulane or in Ann Arbor, Mich., or even further away. The courses at the School of Public Health gave them the kind of information they needed,” Schottstaedt said at the college’s 30th anniversary.

The college consisted of six departments, four of which exist in similar forms today, plus a department of community health and a department of parasitology and laboratory practice, according to David Steen, Ph.D., M.S.P.H., associate dean of the college from 1963 to 1973.

Among the college’s first faculty members was Edward N. Brandt Jr., M.D., Ph.D. Brandt served as associate dean of the OU School of Medicine from 1968-1970 and was honored in 1981 by President Reagan with an appointment as the nation’s assistant secretary of health and a leader during the beginning of the HIV/AIDS crisis.

Brandt, who continued to teach at the College of Public Health until his death in 2007, said even though they finally had their college in the late 1960s, they didn’t have a building. They set up classrooms and administrative offices in former family residences on the north side of what is now the OU Health Sciences Center. But, Brandt said, the location didn’t stop students from signing up.
Preparing the thousands of documents, letters, statistics and financial records needed to apply for accreditation is an immense task. But, the reward is invaluable. Earning accreditation sets a public health college apart and above the rest.

This past fall, the OU College of Public Health earned a seven-year accreditation, the maximum allowed by the Council on Education for Public Health, an independent agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education to accredit schools of public health and graduate public health programs outside schools of public health.

“The accreditation process is intended to ensure a level of quality for public health graduate education across the country,” said David Johnson, Ph.D., associate dean for academic affairs at the OU College of Public Health.

The rigorous process examines the college’s academic programs, qualifications and depth of faculty, scholarship, the quality and success of students and the college’s administration. It also examines whether the college is providing students the knowledge, skills and ability to be a public health practitioner.

“With accreditation, people from outside the university who come here can be assured we know what we are doing. It attracts quality faculty and impacts research funding,” Johnson said. “It’s a stamp of quality for students and employers.”

“MAINTAINING QUALITY

College Achieves Seven-Year Accreditation

We started off like gangbusters. We had applications and started accepting students right away. Grants and support flowed in. The houses weren’t made for classrooms, but we continued to grow.”

The college endured a statewide financial crisis in the 1970s and finally saw funding, especially research grants, begin to increase in the 1980s.

Peter Levin, Sc.D., became dean in 1982 and was followed by Charles Cameron from 1984 until 1989, and Bailus Walker, Ph.D., M.P.H., until 1994.

In 1994, Elisa Lee, Ph.D., became dean of the college and helped welcome a new era with the beginning of a cooperative effort between the college and the state Health Department to rectify the poor health outcomes of many Oklahomans. In the 1990s, researchers at the college initiated several projects that focused on disparities in health care, particularly for underserved populations, which remains a major focus of the college today.

“The college has grown impressively in the last 40 years. I have personally witnessed its remarkable progress in 33 of the 40 years. The teaching program has been strengthened with current curricula and it has also benefited from the increased amount of research. The faculty has strived for excellence in research and has been successful as evidenced by the increasing amount of external funding and publications over the years,” Dr. Lee said.

Despite the college’s substantial progress, it was getting ready to turn another corner that would catapult it into the national health care debate and solidify public health as a driver in policy-making decisions. (continues on page 16)
In 2001, the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center delivered the reality that other nations and groups were willing to attack the United States and cause tremendous loss of life. It created concern over biological weapons. Soon after, the anthrax deaths and worldwide disease threats such as SARS, shifted the nation’s need for prevention and protection to public health.

At the same time, health leaders began to understand that the only way to save a collapsing health care system was to shift the focus from treatment to prevention, which put public health at the forefront.

In the midst of this national transition, the OU College of Public Health welcomed a new leader. In 2002, Gary Raskob, Ph.D., became dean. The timing turned out to be very beneficial.

Under Raskob’s tenure, he and several faculty members have been honored with national appointments and awards, research funding has increased by more than 300 percent and the college has led the way in the collaboration of health and business leaders in an effort to improve the lives of Oklahomans through the creation of an advisory board.

“Early on, the College of Public Health didn’t have a loud voice or if it had a voice it wasn’t heard very well. It did not receive the attention it merited. There wasn’t that much interaction at all,” said Gordon Deckert, a leader in the creation of the college and a former member of the State Board of Health.

“There was a fairly dramatic change in a whole variety of ways when Dr. Raskob became dean. It really became a college that was truly interested in the health of the community. They got involved in the community. There was increasing interaction with other deans and even the provost. One of the better things that has happened are the Public Health Grand Rounds. The college has become a place where people from the Department of Health, Department of Mental Health, county health department, College of Medicine and legislators can meet through the college’s advisory board to discuss issues and solutions. The College of Public Health is now known as an entity. It used to be when I talked about different colleges on campus it would be surprise, ‘Oh, there’s a college of public health?’ Now, that is not the case, thank goodness.”

This past fall, on the eve of the 40-year anniversary of accreditation, the OU College of Public Health again achieved the maximum seven-year accreditation. The college continues to expand, attract more of the nation’s public health leaders as faculty, bring in among the best and brightest public health students and earn increased federal funding for research.

“We have come a long way in 40 years,” Raskob said. “And, with our continued efforts in education, research and improved health for all Oklahomans, the OU College of Public Health is in a great position to help this state and nation achieve improved health.”
College Takes on National Role

As the College of Public Health continues to build on excellence and gain a national role in the public health debate, its faculty members are achieving the same success.

Over the past 10 years, the number of faculty members serving on national committees or councils has increased substantially.

Expertise in bioterrorism prevention, epidemiology, public health business and other areas have propelled faculty members at the College of Public Health into leadership positions locally, regionally and nationally.

The latest group of national leaders from the OU College of Public Health includes:

Daniel T. Boatright, Ph.D.
Senior associate dean, presidential professor, occupational and environmental health
- Association of Schools of Public Health, immediate past chairman, Council of Public Health Practice Coordinators;
- Association of Schools of Public Health, member, Centers for Public Health Preparedness Consultation Committee;
- Association of Schools of Public Health, co-chairman, communication working group, Dr.P.H. Model Curriculum Task Force.

Linda Cowan, Ph.D.
Chairwoman and George Lynn Cross Professor, biostatistics and epidemiology
- Institute of Medicine, member, Board on Military and Veteran’s Health, The National Academies;
- National Research Council, member, Standing Committee on Risk Analysis Issues and Reviews, The National Academies;
- National Research Council, member, Committee on Tetrachloroethylene, The National Academies.

James L. Regens, Ph.D.
Presidential Professor, occupational and environmental health; associate dean for research
- Council on Foreign Relations, lifetime member;
- International Atomic Energy Agency, chairman, technical committees;
- Defense Threat Reduction Agency, member, medical information systems science review panel.

Sara Vesely, Ph.D.
Associate professor, biostatistics and epidemiology
- American Schools of Public Health, co-chairwoman, Biostatistics and Epidemiology Council;
- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, member, Transfusion Medicine/Hemostasis Network Steering Committee;
- National Institutes of Health, member, Rare Disease Network Data Safety Monitoring Board II.

Gary E. Raskob, Ph.D.
Dean, OU College of Public Health
- Association of Schools of Public Health, member, Board of Directors;
- Association of Schools of Public Health, chairman, Legislative Committee;
- Association of Schools of Public Health, co-chairman, Native American Task Force;
- American Society of Hematology, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, co-chairman, National Workshop on Thrombosis.
Oklahoma Wellness Week 2008

For the third year in a row, Oklahoma Wellness Week attracted thousands of Oklahomans and continued to be recognized as one of the leading events for health and wellness promotion in the state.

Hundreds of Oklahomans participated in Walk This Weigh during Wellness Week, including Oklahoma First Lady Kim Henry and gold-medal gymnasts Bart Conner and Nadia Comaneci. The walk kicked off Wellness Week along with the Health and Wellness Fair in Bricktown where families received information and demonstrations on overall wellness.

Oklahoma Wellness Week coincides with National Public Health Week, which is held each year during the first full week of April. National Public Health Week was started in 1995 by the American Public Health Association to help the American public, policymakers and practitioners focus on the importance of public health.

Oklahoma Wellness Week, which is sponsored by Central Oklahoma Turning Point, the OU College of Public Health and other health-conscious agencies and businesses, also featured a week-long series of Public Health Grand Rounds with some of the nation’s leaders in health prevention fields.

Public Health Grand Rounds presentations during Oklahoma Wellness Week 2008 were:

- R. Murali Krishna, M.D., president, James L. Hall Jr. Center for Mind, Body and Spirit – “Health Alliance for the Uninsured;”
- Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett – “This City is going on a Diet!”
- James Curran, M.D., M.P.H., dean, Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University – “Leadership in Public Health: Redefining the Unacceptable;”
- Kenneth Cooper, M.D., M.P.H., chairman and chief executive officer, Cooper Clinic, Dallas – “Changing Lives for the Better.”

Olympic gymnasts Nadia Comaneci and Bart Conner, and their son Dylan Paul, participate with Oklahoma First Lady Kim Henry in Walk This Weigh during Oklahoma Wellness Week.
Oklahoma City on a Diet

With the obesity rate in Oklahoma City at 28 percent and rising along with health care costs, Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett declared, “This city is going on a diet!”

The New Year’s 2008 announcement brought statewide and national attention. Cornett discussed his citywide health plan to reduce obesity and get people moving during a recent Public Health Grand Rounds.

Cornett explained that, like diets, many public health initiatives to combat problems with overweight and obesity start strong and then taper off. He wanted a plan that would spark people’s interest and grab the media’s attention. It worked.

“It almost seemed like we’d opened the floodgates for conversations to take place in every household in Oklahoma City,” Cornett told the audience. “That may be the most powerful result that we’ve had is that people are actually starting to talk about it and take some personal responsibility.”

Cornett, who has struggled with his weight, knows how personal and taboo the subject can be to many.

“Hopefully, everyone will realize we’re trying to be helpful; but we’re not going to worry about whispering because it’s obesity,” Cornett said.

Cornett’s diet plan for Oklahoma City involved the creation of a Web site dedicated to helping users lose weight. The second part of Cornett’s plan involves losing one million pounds as a city, as documented on the Web site.

“What’s really important here is not the distance we travel, it’s the direction we turn,” Cornett said.

For more information on Cornett’s plan, visit www.thiscityisgoingonadiet.com.

Public Health – Global and Personal

With increasing accessibility through technology and air travel, every industry is forced to take a more global perspective, and public health is no different.

That was the message shared by Harrison Spencer, M.D., M.P.H., president and chief executive officer of the Association of Schools of Public Health in Washington D.C., as he spoke about public health’s modern role during a Public Health Grand Rounds presentation this past spring at OU.

“People focus on global health or international health as being somewhere else,” Spencer said. “In fact, the way I view it, global health is public health. Whether it’s practiced somewhere else or here, the underpinning science, the underpinning approach, the underpinning system, is public health.”

It’s not just about living longer, said Kenneth Cooper, M.D., M.P.H., founder and chief executive officer of Cooper Aerobics Center in Dallas. “It’s about quality of life.”

A graduate of the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine, Cooper has spent most of his career studying and speaking about how lifestyle changes can dramatically increase length and quality of life. His first book, Aerobics, published in 1968, discussed the merits of exercise at a time when there were less than 100,000 joggers in the country.

Cooper cited several studies that show how a good diet and aerobic exercise regimen significantly reduce the chance of cardiovascular disease, adult on-set diabetes and help prevent osteoporosis, cancer and stroke.
Courage and well-educated public health professionals – that’s what Gary Cox, director of the Tulsa City-County Health Department, says it will take to overcome the health challenges facing Oklahoma and the nation.

Cox, a member of the OU College of Public Health Advisory Board, is the new president of the National Association of City-County Health Officials (NACCHO), which represents 3,000 health departments across the United States. He said that one of the greatest challenges we face in this country is an ever-growing burden of disease requiring treatment as opposed to prevention.

“We spend more than $2 trillion on health care, and 97 percent of that is spent on treatment after you’re already ill. Only 3 percent is spent on prevention and health promotion, even though prevention efforts are responsible for preventing 77 percent of premature deaths,” Cox said.

“It’s an upside-down system. We have the biggest opportunity with prevention and health promotion, and the next generation of public health professionals will be at the forefront of this movement.”

Cox said changing those numbers will require courage on the part of public officials and the right education for the public health professionals of tomorrow. Perhaps most critical, he said, is the effort of colleges, including the OU College of Public Health, to provide well-rounded, practice-based programs for students. This will ensure students graduate ready to go.

“Students and graduates need to understand the health system in the United States and know how to refocus that system to produce better health outcomes. We want them to look at the public health system we have – those things that are working and those things that aren’t working – and see what parts can be changed to improve public health,” Cox said.

He added that partnerships between health departments and schools of public health are essential to the future of America’s public health.

Cox pointed to a recent report by the Trust for America’s Health, which showed that an investment of $10 per person per year in community prevention would save more than $2.8 billion in health care costs in a year or two. The savings would increase to $18 billion in 10 to 20 years.

In Oklahoma, the total cost of spending $10 per person per year would be $35 million with a total savings of $65 million after one to two years.

After 10 years, for every dollar spent on prevention in Oklahoma, $5.83 would be saved, according to the report.

To achieve these prevention goals, policy makers and public health professionals of today and tomorrow need to focus on what Cox calls “The Big Three:”

1) Tobacco use prevention;
2) A healthier diet;
3) Increased physical activity.

Cox added that the right messages need to reach the right people to help them achieve healthier lifestyles.

Target populations that should be encouraged include employees and school-age children. Health disparities also should be a focus.

“It’s a complex thing we have to address, and we have to do things differently instead of how we have always done them,” he said. “We’ll have to redirect some of our resources to prevention and health equity, but it’s something that can be done.”
Michael Crutcher, M.D., M.P.H.
Oklahoma Secretary of Health and Commissioner, Oklahoma Department of Health

“Recent national health reports reveal a common finding: Oklahoma suffers from some of the worst health outcomes of any state in the nation. The reasons are complex. While Oklahoma has made notable progress in improving childhood immunization rates and reducing the risk of many infectious diseases, we continue to deal with the need for affordable health care and for successful strategies that will impact personal health behaviors such as tobacco use, poor nutrition and fitness, and obesity.”

Howard Hendrick, J.D.
Director, Oklahoma Department of Human Services

E. Scott Henley, Ph.D., J.D.
President, Henley Associates Inc., and COPH alumnus

Kim Holland
Commissioner, Oklahoma Insurance Department

Leslie Hudson, Ph.D.
Community volunteer and COPH alumna

Craig Jones
President, Oklahoma Hospital Association

Ken Lackey
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, NORDAM Group

Mary Blankenship Pointer
Vice President, UMB Bank, and President, Western Heights School Board Foundation

Gregory Pyle
Chief of the Choctaw Nation

Ralph Richter, M.D.
Neurologist and President, Tulsa Clinical Research, LLC

Richard Rush
CCE, President and CEO, The State Chamber

Robert Spinks, Ed.D.
President, United Way of Central Oklahoma

Tim Tippit
Managing partner, BMT Capital, LLC

Jerry Vannatta, M.D.
John F. Burton Professor of Medical Humanities, OU College of Medicine

Marisa New Wells
President, College of Public Health Alumni Association

Ronald White, M.D.
Chairman, Oklahoma Regents for Higher Education, and president, Oklahoma Cardiovascular Associates, Oklahoma Heart Hospital

“Oklahoma health professionals have worked hard through treatment and prevention to improve health outcomes for Oklahomans. While we are beginning to see results, we have a long way to go. We need to accelerate our commitment as a state, particularly with prevention where we can have the most significant impact.”

Ronald White, M.D.
Chairman, Oklahoma Regents for Higher Education, and president, Oklahoma Cardiovascular Associates, Oklahoma Heart Hospital

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Gregory Pyle
Chief, Choctaw Nation

“It is no secret that health status indicators for Oklahomans are some of the lowest in the nation. We must combine all of our fiscal and human resources in a collective effort to remedy this situation. This is our only option.”
From a one-room schoolhouse in rural Nebraska to five years in the U.S. Air Force, Deanna Haener has taken each step of her winding journey as a learning experience.

Haener, who is in charge of finances as the business manager of the OU College of Public Health, wasn’t always involved in business or health. But, OU is where Haener calls home and where she plans to retire.

“I like what I do. I love accounting,” Haener said. “It’s like a family, this college.”

Haener, 48, and her business team oversee all financial transactions at the college from grants to annual budgets.

She joined the OU College of Public Health in 2003 as part of the Center for American Indian Health Research, then moved to the dean’s office as a staff accountant in 2005.

She became business manager in 2006 when the college’s finances became centralized under Dean Gary Raskob, a move she said streamlined and dramatically improved how finances were managed.

“Centralization was good because everyone cross-trained and now there are multiple people who can handle issues,” she said.

Haener’s duties include reviewing all expenditures for the college, creating budgets, performing analysis and handling all grants, including helping researchers develop budgets for grant applications.

She oversees five employees and more than $25 million in state, federal and grant funding.

“It’s a total team effort. Everyone has a piece and they’re remarkable.”

A couple of years after high school, Haener joined the U.S. Air Force as an engineering assistant. She was stationed at Tinker Air Force Base before moving to Florida, where she earned an accounting degree.

Her family returned to Oklahoma City from Japan in the mid-1990s with her four children – Melanie, 25, a missionary in Africa; Mark, 24, a marketing specialist in Oklahoma City; Sarah, 20, a liberal arts student at Oklahoma City Community College; and Jamie, 19, an accounting student at OU in Norman.
Doug Matheny has a one-track mind.

Ever since he graduated from the OU College of Public Health with a master’s degree in health promotion sciences in 1991, Matheny has shifted his attention to one goal – to stop Oklahomans from smoking.

In 1994, Matheny was chosen as the first director of a new division of the state Health Department known as the Tobacco Use Prevention Service. While he was always interested in bettering the health of Oklahomans, his new focus on public health solidified his passion for prevention.

“Tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death. And while that is a sobering fact, it also creates an opportunity to have a significant impact,” Matheny said.

He said he earned his master’s degree while working full time at the health department to not only become more qualified for the job, but to become more well-rounded and better able to understand all aspects of the field. They are skills he utilizes today.

“Tobacco control is a very broad field from helping smokers quit to advancing public policy,” Matheny said. “You have to have a well-rounded understanding of the situation to tackle it on multiple fronts.”

Matheny said those multiple fronts include changing cultural attitudes toward smoking, creating a supportive society for people to quit, helping policy makers enact tobacco-control legislation and fighting new tactics employed by tobacco companies, especially those targeting youth.

“The social norms toward tobacco are changing, but we still have a long way to go, especially in Oklahoma,” he said. “It’s going to take courage to stand up to tobacco companies and turn this thing around.”

For his work, Matheny was named this year as the College of Public Health Outstanding Alumnus by the OU College of Public Health Alumni Association.
The outstanding caliber of programs at the OU College of Public Health has attracted some of the field's top scholars. Five top students from the college received scholarships totaling $7,000, and four Fulbright scholars have chosen the OU College of Public Health for their continued education.

The most recent scholars at the college included recipients of the Edward N. Brandt Jr. Scholarship, which is named after national public health leader Ed Brandt, who served as professor emeritus at the college until his death in August 2007.

Christine Benner and Marguerite Nguyen are the 2008 Brandt Scholars.

Candace Robledo received this year's prestigious Edmund H. Gleason Scholarship, which is awarded to students who belong to groups underrepresented in public health fields and who face disproportionate health disparities. The scholarship was established by the family of Edmund Gleason, who was the first person to earn a degree in public health at OU in June 1949.

The Brent Hurd Award, which was established after the untimely death of M.H.A. student Brent Hurd, is given to students with at least a 3.5 grade point average who are studying health administration and have potential to be a health administrator. The 2008 recipient of the Hurd Award is Holly Van Hoose.

The COPH Alumni Association chose Robert C. Wild and Marguerite Nguyen for the 2008 Rosetta Fisher Student Scholarship. The Rosetta Fisher scholars are nominated by department chairmen or program directors, and must write an essay on how they will improve public health practice and education. The award is named in honor of longtime COPH employee Rosetta Fisher, who retired from the university in 2005.

The Fulbright Program is one of the most prestigious award programs worldwide, operating in 144 countries. Students, scholars and professionals are selected to undertake overseas graduate study, advanced research, university teaching or teaching in elementary and secondary schools.

Created after World War II by U.S. Sen. J. William Fulbright, its goal is to promote world peace and understanding abroad.

The new Fulbright scholars at the OU College of Public Health are Makhosini Mamba, Swaziland, M.P.H., health promotion sciences; Patrick Ndimybanzi, Rwanda, M.S., epidemiology; Mendbayar Nyansarebm, Mongolia, M.H.A., health administration and policy; and Aminata Tratore, Mali, M.P.H., general track.

In addition to the Fulbright Scholars, the college also has attracted two Iraq Scholars and Leaders Program (ISLP) graduate students. They are Khaldoon Al-Moosawi, M.P.H., general track; and Hamad Al-Sawaihey, M.P.H., general track.

ISLP is a competitive program that provides fully funded scholarships to undergraduate and graduate-level Iraqi students in a number of professional fields. ISLP is administered by the Institute of International Education and funded by U.S. corporations.
Al-Assaf Named Regents Professor

A.F. Al-Assaf, M.D., M.P.H., professor in the Department of Health Administration and Policy, was named a Regents Professor for outstanding service to the university, to the academic community and to his professional community.

Thompson Receives Outstanding Faculty Award

David Thompson, Ph.D., assistant professor of research in the Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, is the recipient of the Dr. Robert Magarian Outstanding Faculty Award for the OU Health Sciences Center. The recipient of the Magarian award is chosen by students campus-wide.

Peck Chosen for Junior Faculty Award

Jennifer Peck, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, received the Provost’s Research Award-Junior Faculty for meritorious research. The award goes to assistant professors who achieve a significant personal achievement of original research.

Carabin Receives Regents Award for Research

Helene Carabin, D.V.M., M.P.H., assistant professor in the Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, received the Regents Award for Superior Research and Creative Activity. The annual award is given for superior accomplishments in teaching, research and creative activity or professional or university service.
2000

Alexander, Shoneen C. (‘07 M.P.H. Health Administration), is working at the Pawnee service unit of Indian Health Service as the health education/health promotion disease prevention coordinator, analyzing health needs for local tribal governments.

Harris, Lindsay A. (‘07 M.H.A.), is working as an administrative fellow at the Jack C. Montgomery Veteran’s Administration Medical Center in Muskogee.

Hart, Paul (‘02 M.S. Industrial Hygiene), recently became an adjunct faculty member for the University of Arkansas’ Operations Management graduate program.

Robinson, Maj. Lawrence (‘05 M.P.H.), is a major in the U.S. Army, working as a physician assistant and instructor for the U.S. Army Medical Department’s Captain’s Career Course in Texas.

Stroope, Kami Eneroldsen (‘05 M.P.H.), is working for church media specialist RT Media Group in two areas - as an advertising executive for Collide magazine and as director of the Echo Conference in Dallas.

Wild, Rob C. (‘08 M.S. and M.P.H.), is working at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center as a research assistant and is looking to add to his international health education in the future.

1980

Burgess, Lt. Col. Cathleen A. (‘88 M.P.H. Health Administration), is an officer in the U.S. Army and a registered nurse with the Army Nurse Corps. Burgess returned from Iraq Nov. 1 after a 15-month deployment where she earned a Bronze Medal in recognition of her efforts.

Roth, Beverly (‘83 M.P.H.), is a retired captain from the U.S. Public Health Service and lives with her husband, Richard, in Washington.

Roth, Richard R. (‘85 M.P.H.), health administrator, recently published a book detailing the history of Hot Lake, Ore., where he lived for 32 years.

1990

Erb-Alvarez, Julie A. Reid (‘97 M.P.H. Epidemiology), is the proud mother of a daughter, Lili Mae. After a brief stint working in the Republic of Palau for the Ministry of Health, she has returned to Oklahoma where she now works as an area epidemiologist for the Indian Health Service.

Green, Jonathan R.C. (‘93 M.P.H. Occupational Medicine), was recently recognized as a distinguished fellow of the American Academy of Physician Assistants. He also was selected PA of the Year for 2008 by the American Academy of Physician Assistants in occupational medicine.

Toews-Creed, Lisa (‘94 M.P.H.), is the owner of Lisa’s Hair Chalet in Edmond and is a proud wife and mother of four children.

Young, Wanda R. (‘99 M.P.H. Health Administration and Policy), earned a master’s degree in nursing and is working as a clinical educator for the University of Texas Medical Branch.

1980

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1970

Anderson, David O. (‘73 M.P.H., Ph.D.), took his 30 years experience with industrial and consulting work and joined the faculty at Texas A & M University-Commerce as an assistant professor.

Fraser, James R. (‘73 M.P.H. Human Ecology, ‘77 M.D.), was honored with the Robert E. Mitchell Lifetime Achievement Award for outstanding career contributions by the U.S. Naval Flight Surgeons. He is serving as the deputy federal air surgeon at the Federal Aviation Administration headquarters in Washington D.C.

Lemasters, Janice K., Ph.D., (‘77 M.P.H.), has retired in beautiful St. Simons Island, Ga.

Moore, Rev. Elbert N. Sr. (‘73 M.P.H. Human Ecology), has started teaching in an all-girls alternative school in Tulsa.

Putnam, Lt. Col. (Ret.) Joe A. (‘78 M.P.H.), has retired for the second time in 40 years and is enjoying spending time with his family.

“My M.P.H. degree has allowed me to experience different jobs in health care. Physicians understand what the M.P.H. stands for and respect it, since many of them or their colleagues have an M.P.H.”

Terry Boucher, ‘75 M.P.H. Executive director Colorado Society of Osteopathic Medicine

1960


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.
March
3
Public Health Grand Rounds, featuring Georges Benjamin, M.D., executive director, American Public Health Association, Washington D.C.

10
Public Health Grand Rounds, featuring Robert H. Roswell, M.D., senior associate dean, OU College of Medicine, and Ann Chou, Ph.D., OU College of Public Health.

April
6-10
Oklahoma Wellness/National Public Health Week

6

7
Public Health Grand Rounds, featuring Mark A. Roberts, M.D., Ph.D., FACOEM, principal scientist, public health and industrial hygiene, Exponent, presenting the 2009 Delta Omega Society Lecture.

8
Public Health Grand Rounds, featuring Donald Burke, M.D., dean, Graduate School of Public Health, and associate vice chancellor, Global Health, University of Pittsburgh. Burke will present the 2009 O. Ray Kling Distinguished Lecture in Global Health.

April
College of Public Health Alumni Association annual meeting in conjunction with the Oklahoma Public Health Association annual meeting, Sheraton-Oklahoma City.

9
Cal Hobson, executive director of operations, university outreach, University of Oklahoma, and former state Senate president pro tempore, will present the 2009 Edward N. Brandt Memorial Lecture.

10
Public Health Grand Rounds, featuring Lawrence Gostin, J.D., Timothy and Linda O’Neill Professor of Global Health, and former associate dean, Georgetown University Law Center. Gostin will present the inaugural Zach D. Taylor Memorial Lecture.

May
15
OU Commencement

16
OU College of Public Health Convocation, 2 p.m., Meacham Auditorium, Oklahoma Memorial Union, 900 Asp Ave., Norman. Reception immediately following in Beaird Lounge.