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Boston University
Judith Kurland, commissioner of Health and Hospitals, encouraged SPH graduates to apply what they have learned in the classroom to meet the community’s needs. (photo by Gustav Freedman)

Values, ethics must govern health care reform, former Surgeon General Koop tells graduates

The nation’s vision for health care reform must extend beyond economic and political issues to society’s basic values and ethics, said former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop to the 142 graduates at the School of Medicine’s commencement exercises, held at the Park Plaza Hotel on May 16.

“Too much of the intensifying debate about health care reform focuses...on the economic and political dimensions,” said Koop. “Before we can enact the sweeping reform that I think we need, we must agree on the basic values and ethics upon which our health care system, and indeed our society, is based...I do believe that if we can reach an ethical consensus, many of the economic and political problems of health care reform would fall into place rather easily.”

Among the ethical issues that health care reform raises, said Koop, is the degree to which health care is part of the basic rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. “Most Americans would agree that the right to life brings with it the basic right of all people to lifesaving medical intervention,” he said. However, he posed, “But what about health care as a right to liberty? Should an 85-year-old be entitled to a knee replacement with Medicare?...What about health care as part of our right to pursue happiness: If dieting and exercise makes us too unhappy, should our basic health care package include, say, liposuction? We can probably argue convincingly that all persons should be entitled to any life-preserving health care, maybe a little less liberty-preserving health care, and even less happiness-preserving health care,” he said.

Former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop addressed School of Medicine graduates. (photo by David Herwaldt)

Health care must focus on community based approaches, Commissioner Kurland says

Health care in Boston must shift from high-tech, hospital-based care to community based disease prevention, education and health promotion, said Judith Kurland, commissioner of the Department of Health and Hospitals, at the School of Public Health’s commencement exercises, held on May 16 at the School of Fine Arts auditorium.

“Unless we can control our medical care spending and reallocate existing resources to unmet community needs, health care reform will leave Boston in the dust,” Kurland told the graduates. “Our overmedicalized, overhospitalized, overcapitalized Boston approach to health care leaves us extraordinarily vulnerable.”

Kurland summarized the findings of the recently published Kane Report on Hospital Finances, which she commissioned, that concluded that Boston’s teaching hospitals are building substantial financial reserves and “lavish facilities” without fulfilling their responsibilities to the community. Noting that health care reform will require a new approach toward the public’s health care, she outlined the objectives of a new city public policy initiative called “Healthy Boston.”

“Healthy Boston intends to improve the health of the city, its neighborhoods and its people by recognizing the power of communities and residents, by restructuring the delivery of services and by creating a multisectoral partnership for change,” she said.

Kurland continued on page 2
Removing lead-contaminated soil has limited effect on blood-lead levels

In the first study to evaluate the effectiveness of removing lead-contaminated soil to reduce lead levels in the blood of urban children, School of Public Health researchers have found that lead-contaminated soil abatement has only a modest effect on children with low-level lead contamination.

This study, which was published in the April 7 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association, looked at three groups of children, 152 in all, under the age of 4. The groups represented three different living environments. From one of these environments, interior loose paint was removed, as well as soil and dust abatement; in another, only dust abatement and loose paint were removed; from the third, only loose paint was removed. The researchers observed blood-lead changes in the children in all three groups approximately one year after the lead removal took place and found only modest differences among the three groups.

Ann Aschengrau, Sc.D., a School of Public Health researcher involved in the project, said that although the results may raise the question of whether the high cost of soil abatement is justifiable, a cost-benefit analysis is necessary to determine which interventions work best for children with low, moderate and high levels of lead exposure. Aschengrau noted that one year after the study began, lead-contaminated soil was also removed for the two control groups.

The researchers are now analyzing the data further to determine whether certain children may have benefited more from the abatement than others. In the long run, she said, "We may end up saving money by lowering blood-lead levels even a small amount."

Caslowitz receives University’s prestigious Metcalf Cup and Prize

Joel Caslowitz, M.D., an associate professor of medicine, was presented with the 1993 Metcalf Cup and $10,000 Prize, Boston University's highest award for teaching excellence, at this year's commencement exercises on Nickerson Field. The Metcalf Cup and Prize is presented each year to a Boston University faculty member for outstanding contributions and capabilities as a teacher.
Joel J. Alpert, M.D., chairman of the Department of Pediatrics at the School of Medicine and Boston City Hospital, was honored during BCH/BUSM's annual Pediatric Alumni events, held on May 13 and 14. Pictured, BCH/BUSM Pediatric Alumni Association president, Eileen Costello, M.D., left, presented Alpert with a gift during a dinner held in his honor on May 13 at the Sonesta Hotel in Cambridge. Alpert, who has served as the chairman of pediatrics for 21 years, will continue as a professor in the department. He also will remain active in the Institute of Medicine and with the Joel J. and Barbara Alpert "Children of the City Endowment Fund." (photo by Tracy Russo, BUSM Educational Media Support Center)

Caslowitz has been a faculty member at the School of Medicine and has practiced internal medicine at the VA Medical Center since 1969. Recently, he joined the Commonwealth Medical Group, the new group practice established by Boston University Medical Center Hospital at 930 Commonwealth Ave.

Caslowitz has received a number of teaching awards in the past, including the 1990 Stanley Robbins Award for Most Outstanding Teacher of the Year at the School of Medicine and the 1985 House Officer Association Award for Excellence in Teaching at Boston VA Medical Center. He has been described by his students as a "lively," "engaging," "thought-provoking," and "demanding" teacher.

Stanley L. Robbins Award for outstanding medical educator presented to Rosene

Douglas L. Rosene, Ph.D., an associate professor of anatomy and neurobiology, was awarded the Stanley L. Robbins Award for Excellence in Teaching during the School of Medicine’s commencement exercises on May 16, held at the Park Plaza. Established in 1980, the award recognizes "excellence in teaching and devotion to the students as best exemplified by the tradition established by the teaching of Dr. Stanley L. Robbins." Robbins is a former chairperson of the Department of Pathology and also served as the School’s associate dean for resources.

Rosene has been a member of the School of Medicine faculty since 1978. He has been described as an enthusiastic teacher, devoted to his profession and an inspiration to his students.

Kayne receives 1993 Norman A. Scotch Award for Excellence in Teaching

Herbert L. Kayne, Ph.D., an associate professor of physiology and biometrics and public health, received the 1993 Norman A. Scotch Award for Excellence in Teaching. The award, the highest teaching award given by the School of Public Health, was presented during the SPH’s commencement exercises on May 16.

Established in 1992, the award was named for and first awarded to Norman A. Scotch, Ph.D., the founder and current director emeritus of the SPH, in recognition of his career-long commitment to public health education. Kayne, who has been on the faculty of the School of Public Health since its founding in 1979, was cited by his students for his "insight," "clarity," "wit" and "love of teaching."

Book by Annas that focuses on standard of care is published

Standard of Care: The Law of American Bioethics, by George J. Annas, J.D., the Edward R. Utley Professor of Health Law and Legal Medicine, recently was published by Oxford University Press.

Focusing on courtroom resolutions of real bioethical disputes, Standard of Care explores the fundamental value conflicts confronting medicine and society today. Among the issues considered are the constitutional rights at the beginning and end of life, the public and private obligations toward AIDS, biotechnology and commerce, organ transplants and implants and resource allocation.

In Standard of Care, Annas urges health care professionals to go beyond the minimalist legal "standard of care" by promoting a vigorous, patient-centered medical ethics based on both respect for the human rights of individual patients and responsibility to society. He contends that if modern medicine is to enhance human life, a reconceptualization of law as the beginning of ethical discourse, rather than as an instrument to end it, is essential.

Two faculty members named to positions at Westwood Lodge Hospital

Ilene Gold, M.D., an assistant clinical professor of psychiatry, and Carmel R. Heinsohn, M.D., a clinical instructor in psychiatry, recently received appointments at Westwood Lodge Hospital in Westwood, Mass.

Gold has been appointed the medical director of Westwood Lodge’s Adolescent Partial Hospital, which provides intensive psychiatric outpatient treatment. Previously, Gold was the director of adolescent services at Charles River Hospital.

Heinsohn has been appointed director of the hospital’s Ambulatory Care Central Evaluation Service, which is a 24-hour, urgent evaluation and referral service available to all individuals requiring mental health or substance abuse assistance. Previously, Heinsohn, who also is a member of the psychiatric emergency service at Boston City Hospital, was the medical director of the Women’s Program and the Locked Unit at Charles River Hospital.
Upcoming CME courses

The following is a list of upcoming courses sponsored by the Department of Continuing Medical Education.

From July 18 through July 21, “Genetics for Clinicians” will take place at the Ocean Edge Resort in Brewster, Mass. Aubrey Milunsky, M.D., will be the course director.

Anthony Schepsis, M.D., and John Zimmer, M.D., will direct a course titled “Evaluation and Treatment of the Injured Athlete: Sports Medicine Update 1993” from July 26 through July 30. The location will be the Wequassett Inn in Chatham, Mass. For further information, contact the Department of Continuing Medical Education at x4605 (638-4605).

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