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AUGUST 20, 1979

10TH ANNUAL CONVENTION, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY  
HEALTH CENTERS

I HAVE NOTICED WITHIN YOUR CONFERENCE MATERIALS A BROCHURE ENTITLED " WELCOME TO BOSTON." I HOPE THAT THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE NEWCOMERS TO BOSTON AND THOSE WHO ARE RETURNING WILL TAKE THE TIME TO EXPLORE THIS HISTORIC CITY, AND GET A GLIMPSE OF OLD NEW ENGLAND.

THE THEME OF THIS CONVENTION, " COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES: A NEW DECADE" IS A VERY FITTING ONE FOR ME. OVER RECENT YEARS, I HAVE GIVEN A LOT OF THOUGHT TO THE NEED FOR INCREASED ATTENTION TO PREVENTIVE HEALTH CARE. DURING THIS NEXT DECADE, PREVENTION WILL BE THE MESSAGE OF THE DAY.

THE 1960'S WERE A TIME OF TURBULENCE THROUGHOUT THIS COUNTRY. STUDENT UNREST, RACIAL CONFRONTATIONS, AND VIETNAM WERE ALL SYMBOLS OF THE SOCIAL SICKNESS WHICH PERVADED THE NATION. A GREAT WAVE OF SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS SWEEPED OVER US DURING THIS PERIOD, AND THOSE OF US WASHED BY IT BEGAN TO LOOK FOR WAYS TO HELP CURE OUR COUNTRY'S SICKNESS.

ONE OF THE TREATMENTS USED WAS THE NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTH CENTER. ORIGINALLY FUNDED BY OEO, NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTH CENTERS DEVELOPED DURING THE SECOND TIDE IN THE WAR ON POVERTY. THEY WERE PERCEIVED AS A WAY TO AFFECT THE POOR AND MEDICALLY UNDERSERVED DIRECTLY AND POSITIVELY. AND, IN 1966, THEY WERE

ALSO SEEN AS A WAY TO BEGIN PREVENTIVE HEALTH CARE. THE MISSION OF NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTH CENTERS WAS TO PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH SERVICES, NOT JUST MEDICAL SERVICES. THE MISSION WAS TO INVOLVE THE COMMUNITY IN ASSERTING ITS RIGHT TO QUALITY HEALTH CARE, AND GUARANTEEING THAT THE GOOD HEALTH OF THE COMMUNITY IS MAINTAINED. PREVENTIVE HEALTH CARE IS WHAT NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTH CENTERS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT.

HOWEVER, WE HAVEN'T GOTTEN THERE YET. FROM 1966 TO TODAY, THIS COUNTRY HAS BEEN SO SICK, AT SO MANY LEVELS, THAT WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO FOCUS ON PREVENTING SOCIETY'S SICKNESS, BECAUSE WE'VE BEEN TOO BUSY TRYING TO CURE THEM.

I HAVE RECENTLY BEEN TOLD THAT I LACK OPTIMISM. ON THE CONTRARY, I AM QUITE HOPEFUL. I HOPE THAT EACH OF US WILL TAKE THE TIME TO EVALUATE HOW WE LOVE OUR LIVES AND MAKE THE CONSCIOUS DECISION TO ALTER OUR LIFESTYLES. AND I HOPE THAT EACH OF US WILL REALIZE THAT OUR LIVES DEPEND ON IT.

LET ME GIVE YOU AN EXAMPLE OF OUR NEED TO ALTER OUR LIFESTYLES. MANY OF YOU HAVE RECENTLY HAD TO SIT THROUGH LONG GAS LINES. THIS IS BECAUSE WE DID NOT HEED THE WARNING OF THE 1973 OPEC OIL EMBARGO. AS SOON AS GASOLINE WAS AVAILABLE AGAIN, WE <sup>A</sup>BEGAN TO DRIVE AS USUAL, AND USE GAS AS IF IT WERE INFINITE. WE ~~HAVE~~ CONTINUED TO BUY GAS-GUZZLING CARS, AND ~~GAVE~~ NO THOUGHT TO THE FACT THAT THE ENERGY CRISIS



WAS REAL. NOW AGAIN IN 1979, WE ARE REMINDED THAT THE CRISIS IS PERMANENT. UNTIL WE BEGIN TO USE ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF ENERGY, THE ENERGY CRISIS WILL ALWAYS BE WITH US.

I HAVE BEEN CAUTIONED BY A MEMBER OF MY STAFF NOT TO COME DOWN TOO HARD ON GAS-GUZZLING CARS. I UNDERSTAND THAT CADILLACS (AND DEUCE-AND-A-QUARTERS) HAVE SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE IN SOME COMMUNITIES. BUT, IT IS PRECISELY BECAUSE MOST MEMBERS OF THESE COMMUNITIES CAN LEAST AFFORD THESE WASTEFUL CARS ~~X~~ THAT I STRONGLY URGE EVERYBODY NOT TO BUY THEM. OUR RESPONSE TO THE ENERGY CRISIS EXEMPLIFIES OUR INABILITY AS A NATION TO ACCEPT CHANGE AND TO RESPOND WITH PREVENTIVE MEASURES.

ONE CHANGE THAT THE ENERGY CRISIS -- AND GASOLINE SHORTAGES IN PARTICULAR -- WILL FORCE ON US IS A HEALTH BENEFIT. AS WE ARE KICKED OUT OF OUR CARS AND ONTO OUR OWN TWO FEET, MORE OF US WILL BE WALKING AND RUNNING FOR OUR LIVES. BETTER HEALTH WILL BE A BY-PRODUCT OF WALKING TO THE GROCERY STORE, OR SKATING TO THE BINGO GAME OR RUNNING ERRANDS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD. GETTING OUT OF OUR CARS IS BETTER FOR OUR BODIES, AND FOR OUR HEADS. IT MEANS A LESS INSULAR, MORE INTERACTIVE WAY OF LIFE.

THE JOGGING "CRAZE" AND THE HEALTH FOOD "FAD" OF THE LAST DECADE HAVE ANTICIPATED THE LIFESTYLE CHANGES THAT RESOURCE LIMITS NOW ARE FORCING ON US. THEY ARE INDICATIONS OF A GROWING HEALTH AWARENESS IN THIS COUNTRY. I THINK THAT JOGGING AND HEALTH FOODS ARE MORE THAN JUST A PASSING TREND. THEY

SYMBOLIZE A NATIONAL RECOGNITION OF OUR NEED TO SLOW DOWN AND TREAT OUR BODIES WITH RESPECT. IT IS CLEAR TO ME THAT OUR CURRENT LIFESTYLE IS TOO FAST FOR OUR PHYSIOLOGY.

PREVENTIVE HEALTH CARE BEGINS WITH THE INDIVIDUAL. IT BEGINS WITH THE ACCEPTANCE THAT A PERSON IS RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS OR HER HEALTH. THIS RESPONSIBILITY GETS COMPLICATED, HOWEVER, WHEN ONE HAS NO POWER OVER ALL THE OTHER FACTORS AFFECTING GOOD HEALTH. FOR INSTANCE, JOGGING IS BASICALLY A MIDDLE CLASS PHENOMENON. WHO WANTS TO JOG IN A NEIGHBORHOOD WHERE THE STREETS ARE NO CLEANER THAN THE ALLEYS BECAUSE THE LOCAL SANITATION DEPARTMENTS HASN'T GOTTEN AROUND TO CLEANING THEM? UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, JOGGING IS NOT APPEALING AND WILL NOT NECESSARILY PROMOTE GOOD HEALTH.

JOGGING AND OTHER FORMS OF PREVENTIVE HEALTH CARE SHOULD BE READILY AVAILABLE TO EVERYBODY. TO THIS DAY, THE HEALTH INDUSTRY HAS CONDUCTED ITS BUSINESS ON THE BASIS OF A MEDICAL MODEL. THE ONLY PLACE WHERE A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH WAS USED WAS IN THE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER. THE ONLY PLACE WHERE THERE HAS BEEN ANY GRASS-ROOTS INVOLVEMENT IN GOOD HEALTH PRACTICES WAS IN THE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS. THIS MUST BE STRENGTHENED, AND MUST BECOME THE MODEL.



I SAID EARLIER THAT YOU HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET PREVENTIVE PROGRAMS GOING BECAUSE YOU'VE HAD TO DEAL WITH THE CURATIVE. YOU'VE HAD TO FOCUS ALL YOUR ATTENTION ON MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES, GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS, AND APPROPRIATE STAFFING PATTERNS. COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION AND DISEASE PREVENTION HAD TO BE SECONDARY. I MAINTAIN THAT YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS, TOO.

DURING MY YEARS IN CONGRESS I HAVE LEARNED THAT FEW LAWS ARE PASSED BECAUSE THEY ARE RIGHT AND NECESSARY. LAWS ARE PASSED AND GOVERNMENT ACTION IS TAKEN ONLY BECAUSE THE RIGHT BUTTONS HAVE BEEN PUSHED BY ENOUGH PEOPLE AT THE RIGHT TIMES. POLICY IS NEVER SEPARATE FROM POLITICS. AND POLITICS IS THE ART OF INFLUENCE. THEREFORE, IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO BECOME INFLUENTIAL, FOR THE SAKE OF THE LIVES IN YOUR HANDS.

THE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER IS A NATURAL PLACE FOR COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION. IT IS THE NATURAL PLACE TO BEGIN A MASSIVE HEALTH AWARENESS MOVEMENT. YOU SHOULD BE AT THE VANGUARD OF THIS MOVEMENT.

IT CAN ONLY HAPPEN IF YOU MAKE IT HAPPEN. IT CAN ONLY HAPPEN IF THE CONSTITUENCY YOU SERVE IS VOCAL, FORCEFUL AND DEMANDING. IT CAN ONLY HAPPEN IF YOU REQUIRE YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS TO BE ACCOUNTABLE TO YOU. EVERY COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER IN MASSACHUSETTS, FOR INSTANCE, SHOULD ESTABLISH CONTACT WITH MY OFFICE, BECAUSE ALL ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES KNOW THAT SOONER OR LATER WE HAVE TO COME BACK HOME. TO GET RE-ELECTED,

WE MUST ACCOUNT FOR OUR RECORD. BUT THE PEOPLE TO WHOM WE ARE MOST ACCOUNTABLE ARE THE ONES WHO REQUIRE US TO BE. I AM SURE YOU KNOW BY NOW THAT MOST POLITICIANS VOLUNTEER VERY LITTLE.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS WERE BORN OF THE ANTI-POVERTY GRASS-ROOTS ACTIVITIES OF THE EARLY 1960'S. IT IS THE HISTORY OF COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS TO REPRESENT AND SERVE THE MOST UNDERREPRESENTED SEGMENT OF OUR SOCIETY. RANGING FROM URBAN TO RURAL TO MIGRANT HEALTH CENTER, YOU HAVE A DUTY TO SPEAK IN BEHALF OF THOSE WHOSE VOICES HAVE NOT BEEN HEARD. OTHERWISE, THOSE VOICES WILL NOT BE HEARD.

REACTIVATE YOUR COMMUNITY NETWORKING. HELP TO LEAD US TO A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO HEALTH CARE. TEACH US THAT GOOD HEALTH IS NOT JUST THE ABSENCE OF ILLNESS. GOOD HEALTH IS THE WELL-BEING OF MIND, BODY AND ENVIRONMENT. REMIND MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, REMIND YOURSELVES, AND REMIND YOUR CLIENTS THAT GOOD HEALTH IS A RIGHT AND NOT A PRIVILEGE.

IN THE COMING DECADE YOU WILL BE FACED WITH THE PROLIFERATION OF HEALTH MAINTENANCE ORGANIZATIONS, AND THE TENTATIVE PROMISE OF NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE. YOU WILL EXPERIENCE THE NEEDS OF THE BOAT PEOPLE, AND OTHER ASIAN REFUGEES AND WILL SERVE AN EVER INCREASING POPULATION. YOUR FUNDAMENTAL TASK, HOWEVER,



WILL BE SECURING YOUR ROLE AS PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS.

YOUR ROLE WILL BE TO JUSTIFY YOUR EXISTENCE AS THE FUNDAMENTAL LIFE-SAVER IN YOUR COMMUNITIES. IN APPALACHIA, WHERE WOULD PATIENTS GO WITHOUT YOU? IN TEXAS, IN IOWA, IN BOSTON? THE ROLE OF URBAN, RURAL, AND MIGRANT HEALTH CENTERS IN PROMOTING THE GOOD HEALTH OF OUR NATION IS VITAL.

WE HAVE A LOT TO DO. MANY OF US ARE TIRED, BUT WE CAN'T QUIT. IN THIS STRUGGLE, TO SUCCUMB TO FATIGUE IS TO SUCCUMB TO DEATH. AND EVEN IF YOU DIE, OR EVEN IF I DIE, THE MESSAGE WON'T DIE BECAUSE IT'S RIGHT. THE MESSAGE IS PREVENTION, AND FOR THE FUTURE, PREVENTION IS SURVIVAL. I HAVE BRIEFLY DISCUSSED HOW WE MIGHT LIVE THE MESSAGE AND I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH YOU TO SEE THAT WE WIN.

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