

NEW MEXICO PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

1987 WELCOME ADDRESS

Larry J. Gordon, MS, MPH, Secretary,

New Mexico Health and Environment Department

I am pleased to have been introduced not only as Secretary for Health and Environment but also as past-president of the 55,000 member American Public Health Association and as past president of the New Mexico Public Health Association.

It is rewarding to note the continuing improvement in the scope of public health interests exhibited by members of the Association and indicated in this annual educational program. For many years, the New Mexico Public Health Association was merely the annual training session and picnic for the then New Mexico Department of Public Health.

Our priority concern in the New Mexico Health and Environment Department is to pursue and attain excellence through the department. In effective pursuit of excellence we are doing number of things including:

1) Retaining and recruiting the best professional staff available throughout the department,

2) Insuring stability of such professionals at all levels,

3) Being accountable to and open to our stockholders, the citizens of New Mexico,

4) Insuring necessary training for employees in order that they may render effective service in a rapidly changing environment,

5) Insuring open communication both internally and externally at all levels of the department. To this end, we have appropriately revised the Health and Environment Department public information policy,

6) Insuring routine staff meetings at all levels throughout the organization and throughout the state,

7) Providing for staff involvement in the Health and Environment planning process,

8) Encouraging supervisors to reward outstanding performance by word, deed, and salary increase wherever possible,

9) Encouraging a staff feeling of pride, belonging, self-worth, importance, and professionalism to the end that HED will again be viewed as the most professional department in state government,

10) Encouraging staff involvement in various public health groups, health care groups, business and industry associations, trade groups and others interested in and affected by HED activities.

11) Commencing development of a New Mexico Health Services Policy as promised by Governor Carruthers; and finally,

12) UNDERSTANDING AND PROMOTING THE PRIMACY OF PREVENTION: Prevention and promotion are issues whose time have come but have not been the subject of appropriate resource allocation or resource reallocation in order to stress the primacy of prevention. To this end, we :

Must build a conscience for prevention,

Must not expect health care to bail us out from the consequences of our own foolishness,

Must stop waiting for tragedy before taking preventive action,

Must realize that prevention requires the ability to look to the future and may not have an immediate pay-off,

Must focus New Mexico Health Policy on prevention,

Must develop a constituency for prevention,

Must have a commitment to preventing damage to the human machine in balance with efforts to repair the human machine,

Must identify the un-served and underserved and,

MUST HAVE THE GOAL, "FOR PEOPLE TO DIE YOUNG AS LATE IN LIFE AS POSSIBLE."

We have a great deal to be proud of in the Health and Environment Department. We have a long and proud tradition of effective services delivery to our citizens. The array of services delivered by HED professionals is complex and comprehensive. The department has the broadest scope of health services of any in the nation, as do certain of its component divisions. We have a statewide service delivery organization. The Environmental Improvement Division has long been the envy of the nation in terms of its organization, program scope and professionalism, as has the Health Services Division. The Scientific Laboratory Division is unique in the nation and many states have indicated a desire to follow the Scientific Laboratory Division's service delivery model. Our health care institutions are rapidly improving in their professionalism and quality of care. New Mexico elected officials have been understanding of the health needs of those with mental illness, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse problems and have generously supported appropriate community programs throughout the state.

We are asking that all programs be studied to ensure that health priorities are being effectively addressed and that taxpayers money is being used in a manner indicative of cost/ benefit consideration. To this end, we are considering proposing a Governor's Conference, possibly entitled, "New Mexico's Health--Century 21" in 1988 due to be followed by a comprehensive budget plan to the New Mexico Legislature in 1989 to appropriately allocate or reallocate funds to ensure the highest level of health attainable for New Mexicans in the 21st Century.

In closing, I wish to read something I copied from the Arizona Public Health News years ago:

**'Twas a dangerous cliff, as they freely confessed,
Though to walk near its crest was so pleasant,
But over its terrible edge there had slipped
A Duke and full many a peasant.**

So the people said something would have to be done ,
 But their projects did not all tally,
Some said, "Put a fence round the edge of the cliff."
Some said, "An ambulance down in the valley."

But the cry for the ambulance carried the day,
 and it spread through the neighboring city,
A fence may be useful or not, it is true,
But each heart became brim full of pity,
For those who slipped over the dangerous cliff.

And dwellers in highway and alley
Gave pounds or gave pence,
 not to put up a fence,
But an ambulance down in the valley.

Then an old sage remarked, "It's a marvel to me ,
That people give far more attention,
To repairing results than to stopping the cause,
When they'd all better aim at prevention."

"Let us stop at its source all this mischief," cried he.

"Come neighbors and friends; let us rally.

If the cliff we will fence we might almost dispense With the ambulance down in the valley."

"Oh, he's a fanatic," the other rejoined,

"Dispense with the ambulance? Never!

He'd dispense with all charities, too, if he could.

No, no, we'll support them forever!

**Aren't we picking up folks just as fast as they fall?
And shall this man dictate to us? Shall he?
Why should people of sense stop to put up a fence,
While the ambulance works in the valley?"**

**But a sensible few, who are practical too,
Will not bear with such nonsense much longer,
They believe that prevention is better than cure,
And their party will soon be the stronger.**

**Encourage them, then, with your purse, voice, and pen,
And while other philanthropists dally,
They will scorn all pretense and put up a stout fence
on the cliff that hangs over the valley.**

**I hope that this Conference is as rewarding for you as the preparation has been
for me.**