



## Lessons from the Flu Vaccine Shortage

by Michael S. Broder

The crisis created this past fall when a large portion of the nation's flu vaccine supply was pulled off the shelf has raised questions about the U.S. government's readiness to respond to an epidemic or a bioterror attack. **Helen A. Halpin, Ph.D., M.S.P.H.**, professor of health policy and director of the Center for Health and Public Policy Studies, says the situation has refocused her attention on the need for a much more rational and systematic approach to vaccine policy.

"The U.S. doesn't have a system for ensuring that enough vaccine is produced and for ensuring an equitable distribution of that vaccine," says Halpin, "and underlying that is the fact that in the last four of five years, particularly in the case of the flu vaccine, the number of companies that are producing vaccine has dropped significantly, from five down to two. When you only have two vendors, and half the supply of one

of them turns out to be tainted, you've got a national crisis on your hands."

Halpin believes that a federal agency needs to be responsible for purchasing and distributing vaccines to ensure the public's protection against infectious diseases. "It seems to me particularly shocking, given that we are now living in a post-9/11 world, and understanding the potential threat for bioterrorism and the need to rapidly activate a vaccine system, that basically nothing has been done to federalize and coordinate the vaccine policy for the United States," she says.

When the flu vaccine supply was unexpectedly cut short, it became apparent that the government was ill prepared to respond, Halpin asserts. "The Centers for Disease Control didn't even know who had ordered vaccine from each company or how much vaccine they

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had ordered. They had to get the cooperation of one of the pharmaceutical companies to let them know how much was going to whom, so that they could work cooperatively in redistributing vaccine to the places and people that needed it most."


Halpin recommends several policy changes to help prevent a recurrence of this season's vaccine shortage and to increase preparedness for a crisis. First, she says, we need to build incentives for more pharmaceutical companies to produce vaccines and minimize the financial and legal risk to them. "We need to guarantee them that we'll purchase a certain amount of the vaccine the following year, so they don't get



Helen A. Halpin

stuck with vaccine that they can't sell." She also believes the companies should get a good price for the vaccine they produce. "They're for-profit companies, and they need to make a profit," she says. "The price doesn't need to be as high as some of the other drugs that they manufacture, but certainly they should have an expectation of making a decent return on their investment."

At the state level, Halpin recommends that each state inform the CDC of how many doses of flu vaccine it needs. The vaccine could then be purchased at the federal level, thereby reducing administrative costs. Each state would then be responsible for distribution of the vaccine to ensure that highest risk individuals are vaccinated first.

Halpin says, "What this crisis has done more than anything is raise a red flag that we haven't done the work that we need to do to get our national vaccine immunization systems in a place where they can be activated efficiently and effectively for the benefit of the health of the American people." 



On the back page:  
**Public Health Heroes  
Awards Ceremony**



## Dean's Message: From Knowing to Doing

Schools of public health are actively engaged in improving health and health care for all Americans. Effective evidence-based interventions are needed on multiple levels—from the individual to the family to the community to the larger society in which we live. This will require

not only increased knowledge of the complex interplay among the biological, behavioral, and environmental determinants of health, but also increased cross-sector collaboration involving health, education, business, transportation, and related sectors.

In California, as in most other states, there are numerous initiatives to improve health that involve hardworking talented individuals and groups. Too frequently, however, this work occurs without the benefit of an overall strategic vision or plan to improve the health of citizens. The result is often unneeded duplication, missed opportunities, suboptimization, an inability to leverage each other's efforts, and, perhaps most importantly, to learn from each other.

To address this need, the School has joined forces with other health leaders throughout the state from both the public and private sectors to put forward the idea of an annual summit, the "California Health Improvement Strategy Summit: Accountability in Action." The summit's objectives would be threefold: First, to provide an annual report on the health status of Californians, including what is known about the determinants of health and with specific focus on social and ethnic disparities; second, to establish priorities for the development of evidence-based interventions;

and third, to facilitate the delineation of private and public sector roles and responsibilities and the development of effective public-private cross sector partnerships. Each year's summit would serve as a forum for reporting on progress made since the past summit. The "best practices" about interventions that are working would be spread throughout the state with the opportunity to refine or abandon less effective initiatives.

In brief, the summit provides accountability to California's citizens; helps set priorities for improvement; and facilitates the formation of effective public/private partnerships as a stimulus for action and mobilization of resources.

It is often said that we know more than we do. The "California Health Improvement Strategy Summit" is designed to narrow this gap by transferring current knowledge into action on targeted health priorities in a coordinated fashion. The details of this proposal are currently under review by several potential funding organizations. We hope to have good news to share with you in future issues of the School's newsletter and magazine.

Sincerely,

Stephen M. Shortell, Ph.D., M.P.H.

*Dean, School of Public Health  
Blue Cross of California Distinguished Professor of Health Policy & Management  
Professor of Organization Behavior*

## News and Notes



### California Assemblymen Chair Town Hall Meeting on Health Care in the State

**1** California Assemblymen **Keith Richman, M.D.** (R-Northridge) and **Joe Nation, Ph.D.**, (D-San Rafael) chaired "Health Care in California: Confronting the Future," a town hall meeting held December 1, 2004, in the Bechtel Engineering Center's Sibley Auditorium. Presented by the RAND Corporation and the Communications Institute, the meeting was one of several held throughout the state. Sponsors included the School of Public Health and the Center for Health Research. Pictured: Richman (left) and Nation (right) with **Dean Stephen Shortell**.

### Jackson Delivers Penhoet Lecture

**2** California state public health officer **Richard J. Jackson, M.D., M.P.H. '79**, delivered the third annual Penhoet Lecture on September 28, 2004, in Warren Hall. Jackson discussed the impact of the built environment on health.

### William C. Reeves Remembered at Memorial Dinner

**3** As a tribute to William C. Reeves, professor emeritus and former dean of the School, who died at the age of 87, the School held a dinner memorial event at the Faculty Club on December 2, 2004. Pictured: **Mary Jane Reeves** (left), wife of William Reeves, with professor and dean emerita **Patricia A. Buffler**.

The event served to launch the establishment of the **William C. Reeves Memorial Fund for Students**. To make a tax-deductible contribution to this fund, please make your check payable to the UC Berkeley Foundation, note on your check that your gift is for the Reeves Memorial Fund, and send it to:

Office of External Relations and Development  
School of Public Health  
University of California, Berkeley  
c/o 140 Warren Hall  
Berkeley, CA 94720-7360

# The Legacy of Mentorship

On November 30, 2004, Professor Emeritus Zak Sabry was recognized by his former students at an event entitled, "The Legacy of Mentoring." The program included remarks by Dean Stephen Shortell, in which he announced the creation of the Zak Sabry Mentorship Award, and a video montage celebrating Sabry's commitment to teaching and learning. The event also featured presentations on mentoring. Below are excerpts from a speech by Edith Ng, director of workforce planning and analysis for UC Berkeley Human Resources.

What are the traits of great mentors? I'm speaking of those who make a difference in our lives, who were there for us at the right time, the right place, and if it weren't for them, we would be different people. There are many traits, but I'd like to focus on three.

## Belief in others' potential

Great mentors have a steadfast belief in a person's potential. They instill confidence in mentees because they can clearly see that future in the present. They are optimistic but not overly so—they regard problems, small or large as opportunities. They help us put one foot in front of the other, realizing that "the longest journey starts with one step." And when we falter, they help us push ahead when it would be easy to quit. They create safe environments for us to explore, be ourselves, and make mistakes. They are non-judgmental. It is with this mindset that they can nurture a person's potential to become fully realized.

## Commitment to learning

Great mentors have a passion for learning. Mentors are constantly clicking with ideas and playing out these ideas with their mentees. We think of mentors as giving and selfless, but mentors know that it's a two-way exchange. They get back as much as they give. Mentoring relationships are all about learning more about oneself—seeing things more clearly, knowing one's potential and limits, testing things. The effect of being open to learning on both sides gives the mentoring relationship authenticity. Instead of an untouchable role model, mentors are real people and it is that authenticity and shared enthusiasm for learning that sets the stage for transformation.

## Humility

Great mentors are humble. What they do, in giving their time, in sharing their stories, in helping someone navigate the system, is not considered anything extraordinary by them, but something normal and



Professor Emeritus Zak Sabry listens as his former students share stories about his impact on their lives.

everyday. It's what they do, without any fanfare. They are also vulnerable—sharing not just their successes but their failures as well. As we all know, people often learn best from failures but it's often hard to talk about them.

Mentors see our potential, encourage our growth, shine light on the multiple paths we can take, listen to our fears, and sometimes help us face them. Mentors help us realize ourselves more fully by teaching us to believe in ourselves. Mentors create other mentors. When you've had a great experience being mentored by someone, it is a gift. And when that gift is passed on, it creates a chain and a community of mentees who become mentors. 🌀

To contribute to the Zak Sabry Mentorship Award, please make your check payable to the "Zak Sabry Mentorship Award" and mail it to the Office of External Relations and Development, School of Public Health, University of California, Berkeley, c/o 140 Warren Hall, Berkeley, CA 94720-7360

## Event Calendar

### Spring 2005

#### February 15 (Tuesday), 6–8 p.m. Career Café

An opportunity for students to meet with public health alumni and preceptors to discuss career and internship opportunities, establish connections, network, and make new friends. RSVP by Monday, February 7, 2005, to Eileen Pearl, (510) 643-6382. Please leave your name, phone number, and e-mail address.  
*Toll Room, Alumni House, Berkeley campus*

#### February 24 (Thursday), 1–5 p.m. Spring 2005 Research Symposium

Several of the School's outstanding faculty present their cutting-edge research.  
*Alumni House, Berkeley campus*

#### March 18 (Friday), 6:30 p.m.

**9th Annual Public Health Heroes Awards Ceremony**  
A gala celebration recognizing individuals and organizations for their significant contributions and exceptional commitment to promoting and protecting human health. (See back page.) Information: <http://www.publichealthheroes.org>  
*The Exploratorium, San Francisco*

#### April 16 (Saturday), 9 a.m.–4 p.m. Cal Day

Take in all that Berkeley has to offer at the campus's annual open house, offering a variety of free activities, lectures, sports, and demonstrations for people of all ages and inclinations. Information: <http://www.berkeley.edu/calday/>  
*UC Berkeley campus*

For the latest information about School of Public Health events, visit our web site: <http://sph.berkeley.edu>.

## "Cal calling!" Support the School of Public Health's Annual Fund

During the upcoming weeks, Cal students may be phoning you to ask you to support the School of Public Health's Annual Fund. With California's continuing budget woes, our students have been hit hard. Please be generous when Cal calls!



Ben Bellows (left) and Trina Dutta (right) participate in raising support for the School.



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Public Health

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Reserve your tickets now for the

9th Annual

# PUBLIC HEALTH HEROES AWARDS

Ceremony

March 18, 2005  
The Exploratorium, San Francisco

**Tickets and information:**

<http://www.publichealthheroes.org>  
(510) 643-6382

The annual tradition of honoring public health heroes was initiated in 1995 by the School of Public Health's Policy Advisory Council. This honor acknowledges individuals and organizations for their significant contributions and exceptional commitment to promoting and protecting the health of the human population, and through this public recognition, broadens awareness and understanding of the public health field.

**2005 Honorees:**

**1 International Hero: *Ciro de Quadros, M.D., M.P.H.***, director of international programs at the Alfred B. Sabin Vaccine Institute, for his work to rid the world of infectious diseases.

**2 National Hero: *Sarah Weddington, J.D.***, for her work affecting the well-being of women through her roles as attorney, legislator, presidential adviser, professor, and expert.

**3 Regional Hero: *Senator John Vasconcellos, J.D.***, for nearly four decades of legislative efforts to improve the health of all Californians.

**4 Organizational Hero: *Pacific Business Group on Health***, for its important contributions in finding marketplace solutions for the pressing health care issues facing purchasers today.



**Inside:  
The Legacy of  
Mentorship**

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