



Indian Health Service
Hastings Promotion Ceremony
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Promotion For A Job Well Done
by
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Thank you for the very warm welcome. As always, it's a pleasure to be here in Oklahoma and to see firsthand the tremendous work that you carry out each day.

I am honored to participate today in this very special promotion ceremony. As a career member of the Commissioned Corps, I know personally what a promotion up the ranks mean to our officers, their professional pursuits, and especially their proud families. As we strive to meet our individual career goals, it's reassuring and satisfying to receive a promotion for a job well done.

We are here today to honor those who have done extraordinary work in furthering the Indian Health Service (IHS) mission of raising the health status of American Indian and Alaska Native people to the highest possible level.

All of you who receive an award today serve as role models not only for other IHS and Indian health professionals, but also for the next generation of health care leaders who are watching you, and waiting to fill your shoes. You have created a clear path for them to follow and set high standards to which they can aspire, and in doing so have helped ensure a healthier, brighter future for all Indian people.

I would like to take a moment to speak about Secretary Leavitt's new initiative to transform the United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps. This transformation will enable the Corps, as a critical emergency response resource, to address public health challenges more quickly and efficiently. The Commissioned Corps will increase its ranks, streamline its assignment and deployment process, and increase its ability to recruit the best and brightest to defend the nation's public health.

As Secretary Leavitt said during this January announcement: "Ever since its founding in 1798, the Public Health Service has attracted the best of our citizenry into its ranks to answer the call of

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compassion, of patriotism and of service. We are undertaking this transformation to ensure that this elite force is better-equipped to meet the public health needs and necessities of the future." To recap the specifics of this new initiative, the Commissioned Corps seeks to:

- Increase the number of officers by 10 percent, to a total of 6,600 members;
- Improve response operations and team-oriented deployment process; and
- Change the recruitment process so that it includes stronger personal incentive programs and a better approach for assigning officers.

Commissioned Corps officers have been deeply involved in responding to recent public health emergencies. More than 2,000 Commissioned Corps officers were deployed to the Gulf region before, during, and after hurricanes Katrina and Rita. They set up and staffed field hospitals and emergency medical clinics, treated sick and injured evacuees, ensured hospital structures, food supplies, and water supplies were safe, conducted disease surveillance, and worked closely with local and state health authorities to address other immediate and long-term public health needs. The IHS was extremely well represented in this effort and our Commissioned Corps members stationed throughout the Gulf brought honor and distinction to our agency.

In 2006 we have begun another half century of making a positive difference through the Indian Health Service. While we face the challenge of stretching limited resources while trying to meet expanding demands for health care, we must also follow a new vision for the future work of the IHS. During the National Combined Council annual conference earlier this year, I laid out a new challenge and charge to the IHS leadership.

Today I want to share this new vision for the IHS and how we consider and relate to our patients, their families, and their communities. It is now time to develop an IHS-wide system of holistic care for each and every patient. By this I mean that we must look carefully at each of our patients and how we can best improve their mental, physical, social, and spiritual health throughout our hospitals, clinics, and centers. We must take that extra moment to connect our patients and their needs to our full range of existing services and evaluations. We must help each patient in the fullest way and not treat them in individual "silos" of care. As a patient leaves your examining room, are you sure that they are connected to related and logical services within your facility or their community? Does the patient have family members being treated for similar health issues such as obesity or diabetes? Treating the whole patient and his or her family in the context of their Native community is far and away the most effective, efficient, and long-lasting prescription for treating chronic illness.

Essentially, we want to systemize this holistic view throughout the IHS and, of course, evaluate its effectiveness at each step along the way. I know that many of you are burdened by numerous challenging conditions, and may wonder about taking on any additional tasks, much less a new initiative. My response is twofold. First, in this era of declining federal resources and staggering rates of chronic disease, we have no option except to take action to achieve future wellness. Second, as a career IHS medical professional, I can truly say I know the realities you face and am extremely understanding of these difficulties. But, again, I must stress that we all must work immediately toward instituting our new approach. You must not feel frustrated or

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alone in this process. This will be a service-wide initiative and we will lend all the support and advice possible.

Our Chronic Care Workgroup has identified five related key tasks to care for chronic diseases that I believe are the basis of holistic patient care. They are:

- New ways of working, new ways of thinking, and new designs for the delivery of care.
- Optimal use of technology.
- The empowerment and full engagement of individuals, families, and communities in health care.
- Utilization of all of our professional and lay health personnel resources in the most creative and effective ways.
- A focus on the risk factors and underlying causes of chronic illness.

I know that you, as Commissioned Corps members, do your best each day for the ultimate good of our patients and their health. I again congratulate each of officers today on their individual promotions.

Thanks to all of you for attending this ceremony. Throughout my IHS career and my frequent travels to IHS and Tribal facilities, I have observed firsthand that the Indian Health Service has some of the most competent, dedicated, and hard-working employees in Federal Service. Please accept my sincere and deep thanks for all that you do for the good health of Native communities.

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