

Dedicated to Reducing Health Inequalities and Promoting a Healthier Rochester

Dr. Nancy M. Bennett's extensive and sustained commitment to advancing community health is akin to the quiet, constant and effective community advocacy traits the Monroe County Medical Society (MCMS) recognizes and honors with the Edward Mott Moore Award.

Dr. Bennett is a graduate of New York University School of Medicine and completed her residency and Chief Residency at Bellevue Hospital in New York City. During her fellowship in general medicine at Columbia-Presbyterian Hospital, she earned a Master's Degree in Epidemiology. She was an Assistant Professor of Medicine, a Mellon Fellow in Epidemiology, and taught in the School of Public Health at Columbia University before moving to Rochester.

As Professor of Medicine and Public Health Sciences, Director of the Center for Community Health (CCH), and Co-director of the Clinical and Translational Science Institute at the University of Rochester Medical Center (URMC), Dr. Bennett has served the Rochester community for decades through her current roles and as the Deputy Director of the Monroe County Department of Public Health (MCDPH) for 17 years. "My time at the Health Department was a wonderful experience" says Dr. Bennett. "I learned a lot about administration, leadership, and how to communicate with the community, other physicians, and health care systems."

She applied what she learned throughout her career and became



a well-known advocate for policy, environmental, and program initiatives aimed at the prevention of disease and the promotion of health in the Rochester community, New York State, and nationally. She is the driving force behind the URMC's community health mission, which seeks to inform policymakers and the community about local health challenges, evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, and serve as a foundation for evidence-based practices to improve health and overall quality of life.

Dr. Bennett's interest in improving health for the entire Rochester community has been demonstrated through teaching, mentorship and community outreach in numerous endeavors. Complementing her personal volunteer efforts, she has taken multiple leadership roles in organizations with primary missions to improve community health. In these leadership roles she has performed

faultlessly and exhibited a role model of community involvement beyond her professional career that is respected and acknowledged by community leaders, physician peers and physicians in training.

Dr. Bennett has a career-long history supporting the needs of underserved populations and has taken leadership positions which offer continuous improvement and innovation toward access to social and health services. Among her other roles, Dr. Bennett is currently the chair of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Dr. Bennett says that this honor is largely the result of the hard work of Rochester area physicians who have consistently maintained high adult immunization rates since the years when Dr. Bennett led an initiative to address racial and ethnic disparities in adult vaccination. "That project is long over, but the physicians of this community have maintained the highest standards of care for their patients."

She has directed numerous studies and community interventions funded by the Centers for Disease Control, the New York State Department of Health, and national and regional foundations related to the prevention of communicable and chronic disease. Dr. Bennett is also the principal investigator for the Rochester Emerging Infections Program (CDC) and co-principal investigator of the Clinical and Translational Science Institute (NIH). The Clinical and Translational

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Science Institute (CTSI) is part of a large national network supporting research in academic institutions. Dr. Bennett has played a national leadership role in community engagement and collaboration. Her expertise in community health has influenced our local CTSI to specifically focus on population health improvement.

Dr. Bennett's passion for community health has long been focused on harnessing and leveraging the resources of an academic medical center to improve population health. In 2006, she expanded upon URMC's long history of innovative community outreach programs, turning a vision for community health into reality by launching the CCH. The Center represents the evolution of the Center for Rochester's Health, which Dr. Bennett started while at the MCDPH, with the idea of creating an academic-public health partnership. The Center created a model for that partnership, reinforcing URMC's role as a leader in community health, supporting faculty and staff in developing effective community-based research and service programs, and building stronger ties between the Medical Center and the community. It gave life to Dr. Bennett's passion for prevention as a key to community health.

Under Dr. Bennett's leadership, the Center has quadrupled in size from an original staff of 16 to 70, and she has authored numerous grants contributing to a growth in the Center's annual operating funding from \$1.2 million to over \$6 million. The funding she has secured has supported innovative, community-wide initiatives to improve health, advance research, and reduce disparities among vulnerable populations in our community.

Dr. Bennett has led numerous interventions to improve community health and worked closely with the physicians of Monroe County Medical Society (MCMS) during times of influenza vaccine shortages and communicable disease outbreaks. She collaborated with Nancy Adams, former Executive Director of the MCMS, to develop a community influenza vaccine redistribution process which was recognized nationally. A summary of the project was published in the *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice* with Nancy Adams as senior author. "Nancy and I were joined at the hip in

times of public health challenges. She was my life line to the physician community, and also the only one who could make me laugh during those stressful times."

One of Dr. Bennett's proudest accomplishments was the creation of the CCH-based Healthy Living Center (HLC), which opened in 2010. This initiative was funded through a \$1.2 million NIH award. The HLC focuses on chronic disease prevention, and helps individuals improve their health by making meaningful and lasting lifestyle changes. Through one-on-one counseling and/or group support, the Center helps individuals lose weight to avoid diabetes, manage high blood pressure and cholesterol, improve diet and nutrition, eliminate tobacco use, increase medication adherence, and manage stress. The HLC also works with physicians, health systems, and community organizations to develop and test innovative lifestyle management programs. In the long run, these types of evidence-based prevention programs will have a major and lasting impact on the community's overall health.

Dr. Bennett has been a persistent advocate for the medical community of Rochester by understanding the need to educate and advise both professional organizations and local insurers on the inequalities of health access and delivery to patients across the community. She has served on numerous community boards and committees, including the Public Health Committee of the MCMS and numerous community coalitions. She is an author of more than 100 peer-reviewed articles. She has won a number of awards, including American Heart Association's Heart of Life Award, the CDC's Charles Shepard C. Science Award of Scientific Excellence, and the Innovation in Prevention Award from the US Department of Health and Human Services.

There are few people in any community who have given more both professionally and personally to their community to reduce health inequalities and promote a healthier Rochester. "I'm so appreciative of all the wonderful people I've worked with in this community," says Dr. Bennett. "There is so much dedication to making our healthcare system better and our community healthier. It's been a lot of fun and an incredible privilege to serve this community."