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THE "CHARGE"

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PRESENTED TO THE

SURGEON GENERAL'S WORKSHOP ON HEALTH PROMOTION AND AGING

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(GREETINGS TO HOSTS, GUESTS, FRIENDS, ETC.)

WE'VE HEARD MUCH GOOD INFORMATION LAST NIGHT AND THIS MORNING AND NOW WE OUGHT TO GET TO WORK ... IN OUR WORK GROUPS.

I'VE HAD THE PLEASURE OF CONVENING 7 WORKSHOPS DURING MY 6-1/2 YEARS AS YOUR SURGEON GENERAL. SOME HAVE BEEN VERY LARGE WITH A HUNDRED OR TWO HUNDRED PEOPLE ... SOME HAVE HAD FEWER THAN 50 PEOPLE ATTENDING.

BUT THE SIZE HAS NO RELATIONSHIP TO THE ULTIMATE EFFECTIVENESS OF THESE WORKSHOPS ... AND MANY OF THEM HAVE BEEN EXTREMELY EFFECTIVE.

WHAT'S THE SECRET?

NOTHING VERY ESOTERIC, BELIEVE ME. THE FIRST REQUIREMENT IS THAT EACH PERSON ATTENDING A SURGEON GENERAL'S WORKSHOP UNDERSTANDS THAT HIS OR HER ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IS ESSENTIAL AT EVERY STEP OF THE WORKSHOP PROCESS.

IF WE DIDN'T THINK YOU WERE IMPORTANT TO THE OUTCOME OF THIS WORKSHOP ON HEALTH PROMOTION AND AGING ... YOU WOULDN'T BE HERE.

SO ... PLEASE ... JUMP IN AND HELP PULL TOGETHER THE KIND OF OUTCOME OF WHICH WE CAN ALL BE PROUD ... AN OUTCOME THAT WILL HELP MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF OLDER AMERICANS TODAY AND IN THE YEARS TO COME.

THE FIRST REQUIREMENT FOR SUCCESS, THEN, IS YOUR PARTICIPATION.

THE SECOND REQUIREMENT IS TO STAY WITHIN THE GENERAL FRAMEWORK OF MY "CHARGE" TO THE WORKSHOP. AND THAT'S WHAT I INTEND TO DELIVER RIGHT NOW.

THE "CHARGE" IS MEANT TO KEEP EVERYONE GENERALLY ON TRACK IN SOME REASONABLY ORGANIZED WAY SO THAT -- WITHIN THE TIGHT TIME-FRAME WE HAVE BEFORE US -- WE CAN PRODUCE A SET OF SOUND AND SOLID RECOMMENDATIONS THAT CAN FOCUS AND ENERGIZE THE WORK IN HEALTH PROMOTION AND AGING.

THIS, THEN, IS MY "CHARGE" TO THIS WORKSHOP.

FIRST, PLEASE KEEP IN MIND THAT OUR WORK IS DIRECTED TO THE ATTENTION OF THE HEALTH CARE COMMUNITY. WE WANT THEM TO BEGIN DOING SOME NEW AND DIFFERENT THINGS -- OR TO START DOING SOME OLD THINGS BETTER.

SECOND, WE NEED TO REACH THE HEALTH CARE COMMUNITY THROUGH DIFFERENT AVENUES. I WOULD THINK, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT SOME ATTENTION OUGHT TO BE GIVEN TO THE ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS IN THIS WORK. WHAT DO WE WANT THEM TO DO? WHAT KINDS OF PRE-SERVICE AND IN-SERVICE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS WOULD WE WANT THEM TO CARRY OUT?

MAYBE THERE ARE OTHER WAYS TO TELL THE STORY OF HEALTH PROMOTION AND AGING TO HEALTH PROFESSIONALS NOW IN THE AT-WORK HEALTH SYSTEM. LET'S GET THOSE IDEAS OUT ON THE TABLE AND LET'S TALK ABOUT THEM.

THIRD -- AND IT'S RELATED TO ONE I JUST MENTIONED -- WE NEED TO THINK NOT ONLY ABOUT THE HEALTH PROFESSIONALS ALREADY AT WORK BUT ALSO ABOUT THE YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN WHO SHOULD BE ENTERING THIS FIELD ... THOSE BRIGHT AND DEDICATED YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WOULD BE MOST RECEPTIVE TO A RECRUITMENT MESSAGE THAT TALKS ABOUT A REAL CHALLENGE ... ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH ... AND ABOUT THE TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE REWARDS OF PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE.

AGAIN, I'M DELIGHTED WE HAVE 6 GRADUATE STUDENTS WITH US. THEY'VE ALREADY CHOSEN A CAREER IN GERIATRICS. I HOPE THEY'LL HELP US CONVINCING OTHER BRIGHT YOUNG PEOPLE TO DO THE SAME THING.

FOURTH, I'M VERY, VERY IMPRESSED BY THE BACKGROUND PAPERS PREPARED FOR THIS WORKSHOP. AND I WANT TO EXTEND TO EVERY AUTHOR OF EVERY PAPER MY OWN PERSONAL THANKS FOR TAKING THE ASSIGNMENT VERY SERIOUSLY AND HELPING US GET OFF TO A STRONG, RUNNING START.

BUT THERE'S SOME "BACKGROUND" WE STILL DON'T KNOW ABOUT HEALTH PROMOTION ... ABOUT AGING ... AND ABOUT BOTH OF THEM TOGETHER.

AT THIS WORKSHOP, WE SHOULD ZERO IN ON THE KINDS OF RESEARCH THAT OUGHT TO BE ON OUR AGENDA FOR THE FUTURE. THIS HAS BEEN TOUCHED ON BY SEVERAL OF THE SPEAKERS ALREADY, BUT LET'S DO MORE THAN JUST "TOUCH ON" THIS ISSUE.

LET'S TALK ABOUT THE AREAS WHERE NEW KNOWLEDGE IS VITALLY NEEDED -- IN THE NATURE OF THE AGING PROCESS, THE HEALTH CARE NEEDS OF THE ELDERLY, OR WHATEVER. BUT LET'S GET THEM DOWN ON PAPER, ALSO.

FIFTH AND FINALLY, WE NEED TO SPEAK CANDIDLY ABOUT THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF OUR NATION'S SYSTEM FOR DELIVERING HEALTH SERVICES, WITH REFERENCE TO THE ELDERLY -- AND ESPECIALLY WITH REFERENCE TO THE PROMOTION OF THE HEALTH OF THE ELDERLY.

IF THIS TASK WERE BEING EFFECTIVELY ACCOMPLISHED TODAY, THERE WOULD BE NO NEED FOR A "SURGEON GENERAL'S WORKSHOP ON HEALTH PROMOTION AND AGING." BUT IT IS NOT --- AND WE ARE HERE.

LET'S LOOK, THEN, AT THE KINDS OF SERVICES WE NOW HAVE ...
THE KINDS OF SERVICES WE OUGHT TO HAVE ... AND THE WAY THESE
SERVICES DO -- AND SHOULD -- RELATE TO EACH OTHER IN THIS MATTER
OF HEALTH PROMOTION FOR OLDER AMERICANS.

AT 9 A.M. ON WEDNESDAY MORNING, WE WILL BEGIN TO HEAR THE
RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MANY WORK GROUPS. THESE WILL BE THE
CULMINATION OF OUR WORK HERE THIS WEEK.

WHAT SHOULD THESE RECOMMENDATIONS LOOK LIKE OR SOUND LIKE?

AGAIN, GOING BACK TO THE FIRST "CHARGE" I MENTIONED A FEW MOMENTS AGO, THE RECOMMENDATIONS OUGHT TO BE DIRECTED TO THE HEALTH CARE COMMUNITY AND OUGHT TO BE RELATED SOMEHOW TO THE ROLE OF THAT COMMUNITY IN PROMOTING THE HEALTH OF OLDER AMERICANS.

PAST WORKSHOPS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO HANDLE SOMETIMES DOZENS OF RECOMMENDATIONS BY ARRANGING THEM UNDER ONE OR ANOTHER OF THREE HEADINGS: RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND SERVICE. I WOULD ENCOURAGE YOU TO DO THIS, ALSO, BECAUSE I GATHER, FROM TALKING WITH MANY OF YOU, THAT WE'RE GOING TO HAVE BOTH QUALITY AND QUANTITY IN THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THIS WORKSHOP.

TRY TO KEEP YOUR RECOMMENDATIONS TIED AS CLOSELY AS POSSIBLE TO SPECIFIC, DO-ABLE ACTIONS BY PARTICULAR INSTITUTIONS, PROFESSIONS, LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT, OR OTHER RESPONSIBLE ELEMENTS IN OUR SOCIETY.

FINALLY, WHILE COMMISSIONER FRASER FISK, DIRECTOR WILLIAMS, AND I WILL BE FORMALLY RECEIVING YOUR RECOMMENDATIONS TOMORROW, DO NOT LIMIT YOUR RECOMMENDATIONS JUST TO THE WORK OF OUR OWN RESPECTIVE AGENCIES OR EVEN OUR DEPARTMENT.

KEEP THEM ON AS BROADLY APPLICABLE A PLAIN AS YOU CAN. REMEMBER, WHILE YOU MAY HAVE BEEN CONVENED BY THE SURGEON GENERAL FOR A "SURGEON GENERAL'S WORKSHOP," THE ACTUAL SCOPE OF AUTHORITY OF THE SURGEON GENERAL -- AS WITH ANY OTHER PUBLIC OFFICIAL -- IS CAREFULLY CIRCUMSCRIBED BY LAW, REGULATION, AND TRADITION.

MAYBE SOME OF THESE OUGHT TO BE CHANGED. THEN SAY SO. BUT PLEASE DO NOT BECOME MIRED IN THE DETAILS OF LIFE IN THE BUREAUCRACY.

SPEAKING FOR MY OWN LITTLE "NEWCASTLE," I HAVE QUITE ENOUGH COAL OF MY OWN, THANK YOU.

NOW, LET ME CLOSE BY INDICATING WHAT WE PLAN TO DO WITH YOUR RECOMMENDATIONS.

AS WITH PREVIOUS WORKSHOPS, WE INTEND TO PUBLISH THEM ALL -- THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE INDIFFERENT -- WITHOUT ANY FURTHER EDITING FOR CONTENT OR SUBSTANCE.

OUR STAFF WILL CLEAN UP THE GRAMMAR AND SYNTAX, WHERE SUCH MIGHT BE NECESSARY: THIS IS THE GOVERNMENT AND WE DO HAVE SOME STANDARDS. BUT WE WILL NOT "CLEAN UP" THE THINKING THAT'S EXPRESSED BY THAT GRAMMAR, IN DEFERENCE TO ANY POLITICAL OR OTHER INTEREST.

SO, PLEASE DO YOUR VERY BEST. AND WE WILL RESPECT THAT EFFORT.

THE FINAL PRINTED DOCUMENT WILL BE DISTRIBUTED TO THOSE VERY ASSOCIATIONS, INSTITUTIONS, AND AGENCIES -- PUBLIC AND PRIVATE -- WHO CONSTITUTE THE "HEALTH CARE COMMUNITY" IN AMERICAN LIFE.

MANY OF YOU MAY BE CALLED UPON FOR ADVICE, AS WE PUT TOGETHER OUR DISTRIBUTION PLAN. WE WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT THE PEOPLE WHO SHOULD ACT UPON THE MESSAGE OF THIS WORKSHOP ACTUALLY GET THAT MESSAGE IN THE FIRST PLACE.

I'M PLEASED TO SAY THAT WE PRINT AND RE-PRINT THOUSANDS OF COPIES OF REPORTS FROM THESE WORKSHOPS. THEY TEND TO BE BENCHMARK DOCUMENTS AND OF GREAT VALUE FOR POLICY-MAKERS, DECISION-MAKERS, TEACHERS, STUDENTS, AND INVOLVED PERSONS FROM AMONG THE GENERAL PUBLIC.

I AM SURE THE DOCUMENT YOU PRODUCE HERE THIS WEEK WILL HAVE THE SAME ACTIVE LONGEVITY, APPEARING IN EVERY OFFICE AND MEETING-ROOM AROUND THE COUNTRY, WHERE PEOPLE ARE SERIOUS ABOUT PROVIDING BETTER HEALTH SERVICES FOR OUR OLDER CITIZENS.

THAT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, IS MY "CHARGE" TO YOU. I'VE MADE IT SOUND SIMPLE AND STRAIGHTFORWARD ... BECAUSE WE NEED THAT MORE THAN WE NEED JARGON, RIGMAROLE, AND HOT AIR.

I KNOW YOU AGREE. AND I KNOW YOU WILL BE TERRIFIC.

THANK YOU.

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