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## Remarks on Receiving the Distinguished Service Award

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Scott L. Tomar, DMD, DrPH

Thank you very much for those comments, Bill. I am deeply honored and humbled to receive this award from AAPHD, and I am grateful for the opportunity to have served as editor of the *Journal of Public Health Dentistry* for the past four years and an Executive Council member for three and a half years before that. AAPHD, more than any other organization, has been my professional home since I chose a career in public health. It has been a privilege and a blessing for me to get to know and work with people involved in public health research, education, and practice, including many of you in this room today—people whose mission in life every day is to try to make this world a safer and healthier place.

We've come a long way since the early days of dental public health, but clearly our work in dental public health is far from complete. There's a quote in Pirkei Avot—the third century collection of rabbinic ethical statements—that says: "It is not incumbent upon you to finish the task. Yet, you are not free to desist from it." Maybe

we can't accomplish everything that needs to be done to achieve social justice, equity, and optimum oral health for all, but we still must try.

It's been my hope that the *Journal of Public Health Dentistry* has, in some small way, helped contribute to the science base for program planning, advocacy, health promotion, and disease prevention, both in this country and around the globe. Our journal is becoming increasingly international in scope, and in the past couple of years we've received submissions from at least 22 countries. The spring 2004 issue of *JPHD*, which hopefully will be in your mailboxes when you return home, includes papers from seven nations. I hope we can continue this trend of trying to break the geographic, cultural, and political barriers that separate people, and move toward the World Health Organization's vision of the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health. Here's another quote from Pirkei Avot: the great sage ben Zoma said, "Who is wise? One who learns from everyone." I hope all of us can

learn from each other, across disciplines, across demographic differences, across cultural and language barriers, and across national borders. If we could do that more effectively, I have no doubt that we would all be wiser and healthier.

I thank you for the opportunity to have served as the 10th editor of your journal, and I thank all the authors, referees, editorial board members, support staff, and readers who make its publication possible. I will leave you with one final quote from Pirkei Avot. One of the major rabbinic sages, Shammai, said: "Say little and do much." I think that is wonderful advice, so I will shut up, sit down, and let all of us get back to work. Again, thank you for this award and for all that you do for the public's health.

[Editor's Note: Dr. Tomar declined the \$1,000 prize associated with this award and asked that the funds be deposited in the Horowitz Scholarship Fund of the AAPHD Foundation in memory of Dr. Keith Heller.]

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