

2005 AAPHD Distinguished Service Award: Dushanka V. Kleinman, DDS, MScD

Presented by Candace M. Jones, RDH, MPH

The AAPHD Distinguished Service Award is the highest award for our Association and is presented to an individual in recognition of excellent and distinguished service to public health dentistry. This year's recipient is Dr. Dushanka Kleinman. For any of you who do not know Dushanka, she is the Deputy Director of the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). She is also the current Chief Dental Officer of the United States Public Health Service. I'll bet some of you don't know that Dushanka was born in Yugoslavia and immigrated to the U.S. to become a naturalized citizen in 1972. Following her dental training at the University of Illinois and public health training at the Boston University Henry M. Goldman School of Dental Medicine she served as an Assistant Professor at the University of Maryland for two years.

She joined the United States Public Health Service (USPHS), Division of Dentistry, in 1978 and moved to the National Institute of Dental Research (NIDR) in 1980. She was named the Deputy Director of the NIDR in 1991. From June 1994 to June 1995 she served as the Acting Director of the NIDR. Most recently Dushanka was named Assistant Director for Roadmap Coordination in the Office of the Director of NIH.

Dr. Kleinman's awards are many, including the USPHS Distinguished Service Medal for exemplary and innovative leadership in contributing and directing the development of the first-ever Surgeon General's Report on Oral Health; the Director's Exemplary Service Award for the Surgeon General's Report on Oral Health; USPHS Meritorious Service Medal, USPHS Outstanding Service Medal, USPHS Surgeon General's Exemplary Service Medal, the John W. Knutson Distinguished Service Award in Dental Public Health from



Left to right: Jane Weintraub, Dushanka Kleinman, and Candace Jones

the American Public Health Association, and the Association of Military Surgeons of the United States (AMSUS) 2003 Carl A. Schlack Award, among others.

Dr. Kleinman is a Diplomate of the American Board of Dental Public Health and tied with Linda Niessen as the second woman to become board certified; she also served on the Board from 1987 through 1993 and was President in 1992-93. Dr. Kleinman was President of AAPHD from 1998 to 2000. She served for one and a half years when the annual meeting switched from the fall to the spring. She has also served in many professional organizations and is a past president of the American Association of Women Dentists.

Dr. Kleinman's contributions in dental public health are so numerous that we don't have the time to describe them all, but I am sure that her legacy will be, in part, her leadership on the "Surgeon General's Report, Oral Health in America" and the "National Call to Action to Promote Oral Health." Dushanka's insights and abilities and strategic thinking contributed to the success of these major undertakings in dental public health.

She has also made significant contributions to *Healthy People 2000* and *2010*—our national oral health objectives.

As the Chief Dental Officer for the United States Public Health Service, she will be remembered for her leadership and for enhancing the respect for the dental profession throughout the USPHS. She has greatly improved communication among field officers and between them and the Chief Dental Officer, and has strengthened the *esprit de corps*. She has demonstrated leadership not only for the dental category but also for the entire organization. Dushanka has served as Chair of the Chief Professional Officers Board, has been a member (and chaired) several work groups for the transformation of the Commissioned Corps, has been involved in the selection of other Chief Professional Officers, has represented the Surgeon General in many activities related to oral health as well as the public's overall health. She has broadened the scope of interaction between the USPHS and the military dental corps, gaining the respect and admiration of lead dental officials in the Air Force, Army, Navy and Veter-

ans Administration and serving with distinction on several federal committees.

She is a strong advocate for program planning and evaluation and data collection. In partnership with CDC's Division of Oral Health, NIDCR created the Data Resource Center, which is a repository of oral health data available to all.

Dushanka is also a visionary and advocate for scientific knowledge in diverse fields such as genomics, bioengineering, epidemiology of oral mucosal lesions, informatics and health literacy and applying them for

the public's health benefit. Dr. Kleinman is a true scientist and is always looking for the scientific basis for decision-making.

I was thinking about Dushanka's journeys in life, beginning at age three, when her family left Yugoslavia to escape Communism and walked through the Alps at night, over the border into Italy. She has climbed many mountains since then, and continues to show us the way with her vision, her dedication and her enthusiasm for science, research and education. And she does it with a sense of humor and compassion. She has

served as a role model and mentor to many of us here today.

I could not close without mentioning Dushanka's husband, Captain Joel Kleinman, and their two daughters, Alexa and Jessica. Her attributes of a mother and wife are also distinguished and worthy of recognition!

In recognition of Dr. Kleinman's contributions to public health and dentistry, as well as her leadership to the American Association of Public Health Dentistry and the United States Public Health Service, I am pleased to present her with the Distinguished Service Award.

Remarks on Receiving the Distinguished Service Award

Dushanka V. Kleinman, DDS, MScD

I am deeply humbled by this award and thank the AAPHD senior leadership, my nominator and the awards committee for this honor. AAPHD has been my "professional" home – a comfortable place where we learn from one another, debate, and most importantly, revitalize ourselves. The energy we feel at these gatherings often leads to the "yes" to committee assignments and program event planning. Then when we get home, we realize the full implications of our actions but know the spirit of these collective efforts bring priceless rewards for public health action and for ourselves.

I accept this prestigious award on behalf of the many teams I have had the good fortune to work with, for each of you know that nothing in public health is done alone. Like all of you, I have been blessed with support from family, friends and mentors – many in this room, many here that are yet to be my mentors, and many now departed – and I thank them.

We all know the work that must be done to improve oral health. Some say progress is not being made; others say the progress is not moving fast enough; while others say we are falling behind. All these scenarios have some truth to them – depending upon where you sit and your focus.

I believe we are on the verge of a revolution of progress – progress that will come as a result of organizations

working together. We are witnessing an incredible alignment of organizations, although not all are on board. I also believe that there is, among all organizations, a recognition of the realities of the magnitude of the problems facing us in ensuring optimum oral health for all, although not all organizations see the problems or solutions in the same way. But this alignment of organizations is a beginning. Just look at this meeting and what has been accomplished in a few years when organizations have left their "egos" at the door. As a result we are seeing the benefits:

- ♦ The power of collective gathering and collaborating – AAPHD and ASTDD – a rich program, media outreach and network;
- ♦ The seeding and nurturing of new groups – Medicaid/SCHIP Dental Program Representatives – critical especially during these trying times; and just yesterday,
- ♦ The launching of the Transition Steering Committee of the National Oral Health Action Partnership, the creation of a home for the National Call to Action to Promote Oral Health.

I believe organizational motors and leaders drive change – and success is dependent upon inter-organizational linkages. It is not just a func-

tion of numbers, it is the strength of passions and missions that stimulate and support one another as we address common goals.

I have learned much from AAPHD and its members and leaders. I have learned about commitment, dedication, and creativity. AAPHD truly holds the conscience for oral health. We still have a lot to do, however. The list is long. We must further integrate oral health among health care providers and with other sectors. We must align reimbursement systems. There are many other activities that warrant our attention, but let me stress one that we can immediately incorporate. We must have active participation and routine presence of the public – small letter "p" – at our meetings, and as we develop our strategic plans and programs. Our entire focus is on enhancing the public's health. With their direct participation at our meetings and on our committees I know we will be more effective and our approaches will be enriched. Formal alliances with voluntary organizations is a must.

Finally I thank Tony Jong, who convinced me early on that dental public health was a much better career choice than endodontics. He introduced me to the world of public health and Tony was right, as he always was. Once again, I thank AAPHD.

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