

Archives

Steven P. Geiermann, DDS

Obituary

Sister Rosalie Warpeha SMSM, DDS, MPH, Dentist, Missionary, Researcher

Kingston, Jamaica - Dr. Rosalie Warpeha, a Marist missionary sister, public health dentist and salt fluoridation champion, died March 10, 2006 from complications of Sjögren's Syndrome. She was 64.

There are those that believe that children get a combination of their parents' good and not so good qualities. Sister Rosalie's mother, Florence, was totally selfless and kind to a fault. Her father is convinced that everyone has a duty to serve humanity. It was clear that Rosalie received a full dose of each parent's passion, and as a matter of balance may not have been very well rounded, but she made a tremendous missionary!

Somehow Sister Rosalie had an inner strength that persuaded her to attempt the impossible, made her believe she could overcome monumental obstacles, and allowed her to produce humanitarian results on a scale few dream of. As a working dentist in Jamaica, she was frustrated that she could only eliminate toothache pain, infection, or prevent tooth loss on behalf of perhaps 50 people a week when thousands needed care. She wanted to help all two million Jamaicans, especially the children.

In 1987, Dr. Warpeha, known as "Doctor Sister," implemented a groundbreaking salt fluoridation program in Jamaica that led to a significant reduction in tooth decay in children and adolescents. Salt fluoridation for Jamaica might have been called a stroke of genius. But maybe that is another name for Divine Inspiration. Rosalie's idea was absolutely God-sent for an island nation like Jamaica. It has been written that the results were *striking, dramatic, or astronomical*. All who knew Rosalie would recognize the wry smile when



Sister Rosalie Warpeha SMSM, DDS, MPH

she would humbly say that *miraculous* better described what happened.

With other methods of delivering fluoride, urban populations or those affluent enough to buy toothbrushes and fluoride toothpaste received most of the benefits; not so with salt fluoridation. Rich and poor, young and old, all received help at a cost of about 6 cents per person per year. For every dollar spent on this form of fluoridation, it was estimated that \$250 was saved in dental care. When one takes into account the avoidance of pain, missing school or work, and future disability, the humanitarian payback is ongoing.

Sister Rosalie attended St. Anthony of Padua High School in Minneapolis and the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul before entering the Marist Missionary Sisters in 1960. Dr. Warpeha was a 1972 graduate of the University of Minnesota School of Dentistry. She was the only female in the graduating class, not to mention the only religious sister. She earned her MPH from the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. Dr. Warpeha has been associated with dental public health in the Caribbean for thirty years. During most of this time, she

worked within the Ministry of Health, Jamaica or with the Pan American Health Organization with numerous teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities.

In addition to her service as a public health dentist and researcher, Dr. Warpeha was an active educator for dental, salt fluoridation, and public health programs worldwide. She served as both member and chair of the ADA's Health Volunteers Overseas - Dentistry Overseas Steering Committee, addressing oral health concerns in Guyana, Jamaica, Turkey, and Vietnam. She played an instrumental role in the ADA's development of the Charitable Organization Practitioner Membership category available to dentists who provide oral health services full-time for a charitable organization and who do not receive a salary.

Her list of publications, accomplishments, honors and awards is lengthy and includes honorary fellowship in the Academy of Dentistry International and an award recognizing her contributions to dentistry in the Caribbean. At the time of her death, she was a dental surgeon specialist at the Dental Auxiliary School in Kingston, Jamaica.

At a memorial service, a colleague remarked that Rosalie was the rock thrown into a pond that sets ripples out in all directions, while remaining connected in an ever-expanding circle. Her friends are those ripples striving to accomplish more, while holding true to her example. She took a leap of faith, being mindful of her commitment to humankind, and jumped into the pond that is life. Sister Rosalie helped set us in motion and we are grateful to her.

Sister Rosalie is survived by her father, Dr. Walter Warpeha, Sr. of Coon Rapids, Minnesota, two sisters, two brothers, and by the Sisters of the Marist Missionary Sisters of Waltham,

Massachusetts. Memorials are directed to the Sister Rosalie Warpeha Memorial Fund for Jamaica, c/o Northeast Bank, 77 Northeast Broadway, Minneapolis, MN 55413. This Fund will be used to finish the research she was working on at the time of her death.

Appointment

American Dental Association has appointed **Lewis N. Lampiris, DDS**, director of the ADA Council on Access, Prevention and Interprofessional Relations. Dr. Lampiris brings a rich background of public health dentistry to this position, having served most recently as Chief, Division of Oral Health for the Illinois Department of Public Health. He is the immediate past president of the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors. He directed the dental program for the Midwest AIDS Training and Education Center at the University of Illinois.

Dr. Lampiris earned his dental degree from the Temple University School of Dentistry, a master's degree in public health from the University of Illinois at Chicago, and a bachelor's



Lewis N. Lampiris, DDS

degree from Hunter College at the City University of New York. He began his dental career with the U.S. Army Dental Corps and later practiced general dentistry in the private sector. Dr. Lampiris has served as an adjunct professor at the University of Illinois and the University of Iowa.

Retirements

Kathleen Mangskau, RDH, MPA is retiring from the North Dakota De-

partment of Health in September 2006. Kathleen served as the Oral Health Program Director from 1985 through 2001 when she accepted a position as the Director of the Division of Tobacco Prevention and Control in the North Dakota Health Department. She served as president of the Association of State and Territorial Dental Directors from 1998 to 2000 and as a director of the American Association of Public Health Dentistry from 2001-2003.

Robert J. Collins, DMD, MPH has retired as Deputy Executive Director of the International & American Associations for Dental Research. He is now Director of the Community Oral Health program at the University of Pennsylvania, School of Dental Medicine. From 1991-95, Dr. Collins served as Chief Dental Officer for the U.S. Public Health Service. Dr. Collins has served as Past-President of the American Association of Public Health Dentistry and of the Public Health Section of the Federation Dentaire Internationale. He is a Diplomate of the American Board of Dental Public Health.

Copyright of Journal of Public Health Dentistry is the property of American Association of Public Health Dentistry and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.