

Homer G. Phillips and the Legacy of Public Hospitals in St. Louis

In 1905 Dr. John Green, President of the St. Louis Medical Society, with a keen understanding of the plight of public hospitals in other cities issued this charge to St. Louis physicians on the eve of opening a new City Hospital:

“Will it vouchsafe to the pauper a medical care equivalent to that which his pecuniarily more fortunate fellow citizens receive? Will it fulfill to the utmost its function of providing instruction in practical medicine to the undergraduate student? And will our hospital be thoroughly in accord with the spirit of medical enlightenment?”

*Presidential Report, St. Louis Medical Review
January 14, 1905*

A succession of public hospitals failed in that charge -- City Hospital No. 1 (Max C. Starkloff), City Hospital No. 2, and St. Louis County Hospital, despite their professed missions, opened as segregated facilities. Only under duress, and toward the twilight of their existence, did they admit and treat irrespective of race, creed or color. There is one bright exception, the Homer G. Phillips Hospital. It opened its doors as a truly “public” facility in 1937, still shrouded in intrigue after the mysterious assassination of its main advocate and benefactor, attorney Homer Gilliam Phillips. At a time in American society when people of color were restricted from most medical training programs, the Homer G. Phillips Hospital became the premier training ground for African American medical professionals – many of whom remained to deliver high quality health care in the St. Louis area and who later assumed prestigious positions throughout the nation. The successes of its subsequent years of operation (as well as the complex issues surrounding its closure) became legendary in the annals of public hospitals. It closed its doors on August 17, 1979, followed by St. Louis City No. 1 in 1985, St. Louis County Hospital in 1987, and St. Louis Regional Hospital in 1997. While we cannot now walk the halls of Homer G. Phillips Hospital, we can learn much from its history, presented by the very people who strived diligently to provide culturally sensitive care to the patients who so deeply trusted and loved them and their hospital. This lecture series is named in honor of the historic Homer G. Phillips Hospital in St. Louis.

The Homer G. Phillips Public Health Lecture Series

“Marshalling a Public Health Response to Trauma and Traumatic Stress”



Honoring: Alive and Well STL

Guest Speaker:

Georges Benjamin, MD

*Executive Director of the American Public Health Association
and former Secretary of Health for the State of Maryland*

Friday, October 27, 2017

Washington University School of Medicine
Eric P. Newman Education Center (EPNEC)
320 South Euclid Avenue
Saint Louis, Missouri 63110

6:00 p.m.
Cocktails
Atrium

6:30 p.m.
Dinner
Great Rooms

7:30 p.m.
Lecture
Great Rooms

Program

Welcome**Richard J. Stanton, JD**
Associate Vice Chancellor and
Associate Dean for Administration and Finance

**Introduction of
Georges C. Benjamin, MD****Will Ross, MD, MPH**
Associate Dean for Diversity
Office of Diversity Programs

**“Marshalling a Public Health
Response to Trauma
and Traumatic Stress”****Georges C. Benjamin, MD**
Executive Director of the
American Public Health Association
and former Secretary of Health
for the State of Maryland

Award Acceptance**Fred Rottnek, MD, MAHCM
and Mr. Joe Yancy, MPPA**
Commissioners of the St. Louis
Regional Health Commission and
the co-chairs for Alive and Well STL

Remarks.....**Jennifer Brinkmann, MBA**
President, Alive and Well Communities

Questions.....**Audience**

Georges Benjamin, MD



Georges Benjamin, MD, one of the nation's most influential physician leaders, speaks passionately and eloquently about the health issues having the most impact on our nation today. As executive director of the American Public Health Association (APHA) since 2002, he is leading the Association's push to make America the healthiest nation in one generation. An established administrator, author and orator, he came to APHA from his position as secretary of the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Benjamin became secretary of health in Maryland in April 1999, following four years as its deputy secretary for public health services. As secretary, Benjamin oversaw the expansion and improvement of the state's Medicaid program.

Dr. Benjamin is a graduate of the Illinois Institute of Technology and the University of Illinois College of Medicine. He is board-certified in internal medicine and a fellow of the American College of Physicians, a fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration, a fellow emeritus of the American College of Emergency Physicians and an honorary fellow of the Royal Society of Public Health. He served as chief of emergency medicine at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center and later chaired the Department of Community Health and Ambulatory Care at the District of Columbia General Hospital. He was acting commissioner for public health for the District of Columbia and later directed one of the busiest ambulance services in the nation as interim director of the Emergency Ambulance Bureau of the District of Columbia Fire Department. In the early 1990s, he responded to the shifting epidemiology and built on the Maternal and Child Health work to address HIV/AIDS.

At APHA, Benjamin serves as publisher of the nonprofit's monthly publication, *The Nation's Health*, the association's official newspaper, and the *American Journal of Public Health*, the profession's premier scientific publication. He is the author of more than 100 scientific articles and book chapters. He is also co-editor of the 2005 report *Quarantine Stations at Ports of Entry: Protecting the Public's Health*. His recent book *The Quest for Health Reform: A Satirical History* is an exposé of the nearly 100-year quest to ensure quality affordable health coverage for all.

Benjamin is a member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies and serves on the boards for many organizations including Research!America, the Reagan-Udall Foundation and the University of Maryland Medical System. He was voted among the 100 most influential people in health care from 2007-2013 and one of the Nation's most influential physician executives from 2009-2015. In April 2016, President Obama appointed Dr. Benjamin to the National Infrastructure Advisory Council, a council that advises the President on how best to assure the security of the nation's critical infrastructure. Dr. Benjamin continues to speak forcefully on climate control, gun violence, and improving diversity among the country's public health and healthcare workforce.

Alive and Well STL



Alive and Well STL, founded by the St. Louis Regional Health Commission, is a regional health initiative that tackles the medical and behavioral toll of trauma and toxic stress in the St. Louis community. The research is clear: toxic stress and traumatic experiences are making many of us sick and is a leading cause of poor health outcomes. Alive and Well STL took on further intensity after violence and protests erupted last summer in response to the fatal shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson and the trauma that ensued. Protesters, media and civic leaders began to recognize that the long-existing toxic stress in Ferguson and many other poor areas of north St. Louis County contributed to social unrest. Much of that stress is caused by poverty, racism, segregation and economic inequity in St. Louis City and County neighborhoods.

The initiative aims to improve the overall health and well-being of the community by:

- Activating individuals, neighborhoods and communities to create safe, supportive relationships that are critical to achieving wellness.
- Highlighting the resources that are available and needed for the people of our community to be healthy. Alive and Well changes the narrative in dealing with traumatic life experiences by asking "what happened to you?" rather than "what's wrong with you?"
- Discussing how we can add to and strengthen existing assets to ensure wellness, both mental and physical.

To become Alive and Well, St. Louis needs informed, supportive communities; service providers who have adopted trauma-informed practices; and trauma-informed mental health services. According to the Alive and Well team, "As we become trauma-informed, we will become increasingly emotionally and physically well, enabling us to be Alive and Well in St. Louis."