

## Guest Editorials

### John A. Burns School of Medicine: a rebirth

EDWIN CADMAN\*

These are indeed exciting times at the John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM) at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. The School of Medicine is undergoing a transformation that seeks to retain the best features of its rich history and to supplement these with new initiatives important for the future of our School, State and region. The medical school can and must continue to be the primary source of physicians to meet Hawai'i's needs for moving medical care into the future. The School will continue to discharge this obligation via the use of our unique problem-based learning curriculum that exposes students to clinical material in case-based, real world scenarios that make sense in our unique, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society.

JABSOM will not forsake this heritage of educational excellence; however, there are other ways in which the School of Medicine can and should contribute to the health of Hawai'i's communities as well as of the Asian/Pacific region. There are many research questions that have unique relevance and importance for the population of Hawai'i and that are not being investigated at other medical schools. Why is it that the Native Hawaiian population suffers disproportionately from nearly every major medical condition including heart disease, asthma, diabetes and cancer? The Filipino population, too, has increased incidence of many of these same conditions. The reasons for the disparities in health status of and access to care by our island populations are complex and not well understood. To explore these important issues, research must be undertaken by top quality scientists sensitive to local cultural considerations. What better, more appropriate place to take on this work but our own University of Hawai'i School of Medicine. Therefore, we have been working with a group

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of Native Hawaiian community leaders, traditional healers, and faculty members to create a strategic plan for a new Department of Native Hawaiian Health and Health Disparities.

There are other areas of particular interest to Hawai'i but which have universal importance. New departments of Geriatric Medicine, Integrative Medicine, and Ecology and Health will also be part of an overall reorganization plan for the School of Medicine that is currently in preparation. The Department of Integrative Medicine will study the scientific basis for what we know to be true; i.e., the effectiveness of traditional healing practices in many cultures. Hawai'i is a unique location to study integrative medicine based on the wide use of alternative therapies by our population and the many well-qualified practitioners of these treatment modalities who live and work here. How does our impact on the environment affect human health and disease? What great discoveries relevant to the treatment of disease are locked in the endless ocean that surrounds our home? The new Department of Ecology and Human Health will focus its efforts on understanding the interrelationships between human activities, the natural environment, and human health. Finally, in Hawai'i where our population has the longest life span of any state in the country, the place of elders in society has always been an honored one. It is important that the School of Medicine be a focus of excellence in geriatric medicine given the characteristics of our population and our cultures.

These new departments and new initiatives, and the faculty and students they will attract, will only be effective if we provide an appropriate infrastructure. One very important component of what is necessary for success is

state-of-the-art research and educational space. Therefore, we have been working diligently with the Governor, the legislature, community leaders, and University officials to realize the dream of creating a new biomedical campus at Kaka'ako for the medical school and its partners, the

Pacific Biomedical Research Center, the Cancer Research Center of Hawai'i and other health-related programs and initiatives at the University and in the community. The fulfillment of this vision will have a major impact on the School of Medicine's future. With modern, functional space we can recruit top-notch new faculty to build our research capacity and provide existing faculty with the infrastructure they need to be maximally successful. This, in turn, will create jobs and lead to exciting new discoveries in many fields of biomedical science that have commercial application. Thus, the School of Medicine can be a major contributor to the State's economy.

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Our proposed new facility would be a uniquely Hawaiian building situated on a ten-acre parcel in Kaka'ako, mauka of the Waterfront Park. The campus we envision nestles invitingly into the landscape and draws on the beauty of our surroundings to create an environment which scientists and students alike would find inspiring. The campus would include such unique features as a Lā'au Lapa'au garden to demonstrate the importance and potential of traditional healing practices to the future of medicine, and a visitor center that would serve as a community education resource for healthcare education.

We are hopeful that our vision for Kaka'ako becomes a reality, but meanwhile the John A. Burns School of Medicine continues its commitment to helping to improve the health status of people of our State through on-going support of the Native Hawaiian Center of Excellence, the Area Health Education Centers, and the 'Imi Ho'ola programs, all of which we see as key components to the future of the medical school. Diversifying the State's healthcare work force and creating a pipeline of opportunities for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to pursue careers in medicine and the health sciences are key goals of our School. Providing community and school-based health care education, supporting practitioners in rural and under-served areas and developing future faculty from amongst our Native Hawaiian community are all ways in which JABSOM gives back to our State for the support it receives. In addition, JABSOM's programs are making great strides in positively impacting the health status of people in the Asian/Pacific region (e.g., dissemination and training of problem-based learning, education of Asian Americans & Pacific Islander's).

In summary, these are indeed exciting times for the John A. Burns School of Medicine. With the help of our faculty, students, and staff, as well as our community, we seek nothing less than a rebirth of the medical school. We strive to create a medical school that we all can be proud of and which makes significant contributions to the health status of our State and region. In short, we strive to become the best medical school in the world with an Asia-Pacific focus.

## A roadmap to the 21st century

GLADYS 'AINOA BRANDT\*

This special Hawaiian Health edition of the *Pacific Health Dialog* represents to those of us who have dedicated ourselves to the advancement of Hawai'i's native people a recall of anxious moments of the past when what we once

saw as mere glimpses of possibilities have now become unfolding dreams on the edges of fruition. Within sixteen years of the publication of the *E Ola Mau: Hawaiian Health Needs Study*, the workforce of our dreams is now a 21<sup>st</sup> century reality. Cadres of clinician-scholars in epidemiology, prevention, and intervention in basic, applied, medical, behavioral, and alternative healing research and clinical care have been created. Perhaps the most impressive achievement is the significant leadership provided by Native Hawaiian scholars, clinicians and researchers.

Fundamental to the development of these leaders has been the University of Hawai'i. These young scholars, some of them the first among our *kanaka maoli* to be specialists in their disciplines, have been educated and trained within our undergraduate, graduate, or postgraduate programs. The fruits of their endeavors, contained in the articles of this special *Pacific Health Dialog* issue, give compelling evidence that among our UH scholars are the intellectual depth and breadth to achieve greatness, which will translate into better health for all *kanaka maoli*.

The papers contained in this journal take the work of the *E Ola Mau Study* to the next level and chart the roadmap for further work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The articles within this issue present information on Native Hawaiian health which enhances our epidemiologic understanding of illness which has plagued *kanaka maoli*; redefines the context and concepts of clinical practice, including the significance of traditional Hawaiian healers; examines how cultural concepts can be integrated into 21<sup>st</sup> century medicine; provides new prevention and intervention strategies for Hawaiian health; and further defines the needs and some of the solutions for Hawaiian health, which weave the common social and political threads needed to address the health needs of the native people within our multi-cultural island society.

In 1985, when the *E Ola Mau: Hawaiian Health Needs Study* was published, the lack of Native Hawaiian scholars, clinicians, and researchers was glaring. At that time, I served as the Chair of the University of Hawai'i Board of Regents, and dedicated my tenure toward meeting this need. It gives me immeasurable joy to see the product of our efforts over the past 15 years with the publication of this *Pacific Health Dialog*. The critical mass of scholars, clinicians and researchers are the next generation of health care leaders in Hawai'i who will take the necessary steps in improving the health of *kanaka maoli*. ■

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