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THE EPIDEMIOLOGY MONITOR

A monthly update covering people, events, research and key developments

## David Kleinbaum, Star Epidemiology Teacher For Over Three Decades, Wins First Annual U.S. Competition For Best Public Health Teacher

The list of accomplishments in his nomination package is remarkably long and varied, and the passion for teaching comes through loud and clear. If these were important criteria for selection of the nation's best public health teacher, and undoubtedly they were, then it should come as no surprise to anyone who knows him that David Kleinbaum was selected as the winner of the first Association of Schools of Public Health (ASPH)/Pfizer Award For Teaching Excellence.

Kleinbaum, an Emory University Rollins School of Public Health Professor of Epidemiology, was selected from a crop of nominees from 19 accredited US Schools of Public Health. Since each School was presumably nominating the teacher it considered to be its best or one of its best teachers (there are more than 7,500 faculty members in the US in 37 accredited schools of public health), Kleinbaum's success in winning the award is all the more impressive. He

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## Ohio State School of Public Health Is Committed To Becoming A First Rank Institution

For most of its first 10 years of existence, the Ohio State University School of Public Health just limped along, according to one source at the School. It experienced no significant growth, did not have a permanent dean, and the ones it did have reported as subordinates to the head of the medical school. One measure of the school's stagnant performance was the small amount on a per capita basis of external per capita funding attracted by the faculty, according to one insider.

Now all that is changing.

Under the threat of losing its accreditation in public health because of its organizational structure, and buoyed by the new leadership of Karen Holbrook, a very supportive President of the University, the Ohio State School of Public Health is on a mission to become a first rate School of Public Health. It has changed its structure as required by the accredi-

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## Promoters Of Teaching Epidemiology To 6-12th Graders Discuss Implementation Challenges At APHA Session

Their symbol is a shoe horn and the symbol says it all about the challenges facing developers of epidemiology teaching materials for students in grades 6-12—how do they get epidemiology content infused into a curriculum already crowded with more mainstream science subjects such as biology, chemistry, and physics? The challenge becomes particularly daunting when teachers and schools are evaluated on how well their students perform on standardized exams which do not contain epidemiology related questions. At present, developers cannot identify many in middle school or high school teaching an actual course in epidemiology, although bits and pieces are taught more frequently.

The challenge of integrating epidemiology material is common to three initiatives which have been developed over recent years to bring epidemiology to middle and high school students. The first was the EXCITE program developed at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention which uses a case studies approach, a second is Detectives in the Classroom, a curriculum developed at Montclair State University for middle school students which uses a set of essential questions to develop enduring epidemiologic understandings, and the Young Epidemiology Scholars program created by the Robert Wood Johnson Program and operated by the College Board which created a set of 27 modules in collaboration with former CDC epidemiologist David Fraser on separate epidemiology related topics. After consulting with teachers in focus groups, these modules were

specifically designed to make it easier for teachers to “shoe horn” epidemiology into their curricula.

The three groups have banded together into what they call the Epidemiology Education Movement with three goals to 1) infuse epidemiology education into curricula in grades 6-12, 2) improve scientific literacy, and 3) increase the number of students preparing for careers in public health. To achieve these goals, a number of more specific actions are envisaged. These include:

- a) continued development of epidemiology teaching materials suited to young students
- b) implementation of teacher training workshops
- c) implementation of demonstration projects in a variety of school and non-school venues,
- d) introduction of epidemiology into state and national standards, standardized testing, and into textbooks.
- e) development of mechanisms to focus and coordinate the efforts of many interested but busy stakeholders such as teachers, school administrators, the media, and epidemiologists.

At the APHA annual meeting, a group of interested persons gathered to hear presentations from the three groups of curriculum developers and to discuss the goals and objectives described above. Ralph Cordell from CDC presented on EXCITE, Wendy Huebner, co-developer of Detectives in the Classroom spoke about that curriculum, and David Fraser described

the YES modules. According to Mark Kaelin, the other developer of *Detectives in the Classroom*, the conversation at APHA was lively and some of the participants signed on to follow up on the Movement's activities.

The Movement group has created is a list of the top 8 reasons for teaching or learning epidemiology. A slightly edited version of these 8 reasons is presented below:

1. Empowers students to be scientifically literate participants in the democratic decision making process on public health policy.
2. Empowers students to make more informed personal health related decisions.
3. Increases student media literacy and their understanding of public health messages.
4. Increases student understanding of the bases for determining risk.
5. Improves student mathematical and scientific literacy.
6. Expands student understanding of scientific methods and develops their critical thinking skills.
7. Provides students with another mechanism for exploring important, real world questions about their health and the health of others.
8. Introduces students to an array of career paths related to the public's health.

Readers interested in the goals of the Epidemiology Education Movement who wish to learn more about its activities and to learn how to get involved may contact Mark Kaelin at  
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