

HEALTH CARE CONSUMER

Spring

Newsletter of the Champaign County Health Care Consumers

1996

Charles Bell Speaks to Full House at CCHCC Awards Dinner...

Chuck Bell, Programs Director of Consumers Union, publisher of Consumer Reports, spoke to nearly two hundred CCHCC members and supporters at the March 23 Awards Dinner at Jumer's in Urbana. His address was a call to get "health care reform back on track."

"When I asked our lobbyist in Washington D.C. what people here in Champaign County can do to revive the push for health care reform, she

said 'vote'." Bell talked of the interest groups' efforts to kill health care reform the last go around, and said that the way consumers can win over the money of the insurance industry and other special interests is to get involved and organize.

Mr. Bell specifically noted the importance of the campaign to create a county-wide public health department. *(More dinner photos and awards on page 4)*



Board Member Judy Davis presents WILL-TV's Allison Davis with the 1996 Excellence in Health Care Reporting Award at CCHCC's Awards Dinner.

CCHCC Member Phone Calls Make the Difference in Vote

Agency Investigation Underway

In a unanimous vote that surprised many political observers, the Legislative Audit Commission voted for a full investigation into the Illinois Department Professional Regulation's Medical Division. The vote culminated an 18 month push by consumer groups for an investigation into the Department, which is responsible for monitoring and disciplining bad

doctors. Here in central Illinois, CCHCC members played a central role by flooding the office of Rep. Rick Winkle, who serves on the Commission, with calls in favor of the investigation.

Families Advocating Injury Reduction (FAIR), a statewide consumer organization representing victims of medical malpractice, initiated the call for an investigation in 1994, after collecting data under the Freedom of Information Act which raised serious concerns about the agency's effectiveness. Since then, investigative reports in the Chicago Sun-Times, the Springfield Journal-Registrar, and Chicago Magazine uncovered numerous deficiencies. The Resolution, passed by the Commission on February 5,

directs the Illinois Auditor General to begin a Performance Audit of the Department's Medical Division, which has come under intense criticism for its failure to protect consumers from impaired and incompetent doctors.

Despite overwhelming evidence that there were serious problems at the Department, the unanimous vote surprised many seasoned political observers, because the State Medical Society was strongly opposed to any investigation into how the state monitored and disciplined doctors in Illinois. One of the most powerful lobbying groups in the state, the Medical Society is also the largest financial contributor to the Republican Party, which controls both the House, Senate and Governor's office.

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not-for-profit organization
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affordable health care for all.

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Sens. Simon and Moseley-Braun score well, Rep. Ewing fails badly

Local Coalition Releases Environmental Scorecard

by Dan Ferber

On Feb. 14, the League of Conservation Voters (LCV), a 25-year-old non-partisan political action organization, released its National Environmental Scorecard simultaneously in over 60 cities. A broad coalition of 19 environmental, health, labor, womens, farm, and religious groups, including the Champaign County Health Care Consumers, released the results locally at a press conference in Champaign's City Council chambers.

The Scorecard rates all Representatives and Senators on a scale of 0 to 100%, using an index of key environmental and public health votes.

Illinois Senators Paul Simon and Carol Moseley-Braun received scores of 100% and 93%, respectively. Crucial Senate votes included a vote on an amendment to S. 1, which would have exempted health protection for children, pregnant women, and the elderly from procedural hurdles designed to prevent regulation; and a vote on an amendment to S. 343 which would have facilitated EPA protective rules on dangerous microbes in drinking water, such as the *Cryptosporidium* parasite that killed 104 people in Milwaukee in 1993. Both amendments failed narrowly, despite the Illinois Senators' support.

Local Rep. Tom Ewing earned a failing 15% score. On 10 of the 12 key environmental votes in the House, Rep. Ewing was judged by the LCV to have "voted against the environment and environmental health."

"What is most distressing to our local situation is the degree to which our Congressman, Thomas Ewing, supports some of the most environmentally debilitating proposals now before Congress," said CCHCC Board Member, Marion Gushee. One such bill is H.R. 9, which creates numerous new procedural hurdles to new health and safety rules, and creates new opportunities for industry to challenge and roll back existing environmental protection through the courts.

Another key House vote was on H.R. 961, co-sponsored by Rep. Ewing. H.R. 961 would relax or waive the Clean Water Act's water pollution control regulations, subject public health protections to new cost analyses, lower water quality standards, reduce treatment requirements for sewage discharges, roll back wetlands protection, and weaken treatment requirements for toxic pollution. According to the LCV, H.R. 961 is so environmentally harmful that they scored it twice and dubbed it "The Dirty Water Act." According to spokesman Terry Greene, however, Ewing takes a "common-sense approach" to environmental legislation.

In response to the public criticism, Rep. Ewing's office dismissed the LCV and the member groups of the coalition as a "radical liberal, Ralph Nader-led front group for fringe environmentalists," and a "dog and pony show" led by Rep. Ewing's opponents. However, Ralph Nader does not and never has had any affiliation with the LCV, nor with any of the member organizations. Further, the LCV has issued its National Environmental Scorecard each year for 25 years, substantially predating Rep. Ewing's political career.

More critically for Ewing, the coalition that released the scorecard totalled 19 local groups with a combined membership of over 12,000 of Mr. Ewing's constituents, and included groups such as the League of Women Voters, the Physicians for Social Responsibility, the Illinois Stewardship Alliance, the Sierra Club, and the Audubon Society.

"Rep. Ewing's response is consistent with past dealings with public critics in its lack of respect for the facts," said Dan Ferber of the Prairie Group of the Sierra Club, another coalition member. "He completely dismisses the serious environmental concerns of thousands of his constituents."

According to the LCV, the organization's goals for the 1996 elections are to "elect the best environmentalists, defeat the worst, and make the others think twice before voting against the environment."

Area Consumers Support Frances Nelson

When local politicians threatened to interfere with the operation of the Frances Nelson Health Center last November, CCHCC's Board of Directors voted to do what it could to protect the community health center from outside interference. As part of that effort, CCHCC conducted a survey of the Center's patients, which showed overwhelming satisfaction with the services provided.

"Frances Nelson has demonstrated time and again its commitment and ability to provide quality health care to low-income consumers in our community," said CCHCC Board Chair Lilia Peters in a letter published in the News Gazette last January. "More resources and less interference by outsiders in internal administrative issues at the Center" is what is needed at this time.

The controversy began when the Center's executive director was fired after it was discovered that she misled the Board on her qualifications and education. In an apparent disagreement with this decision, Champaign and Urbana mayors began efforts to discredit and challenge the Center's Board of Directors.

Because Frances Nelson is the main source of primary health care for thousands of low-income consumers, CCHCC and many people in the community were concerned that patient care was being overshadowed by politics. These concerns were heightened when the mayors began contacting the Center's funders and convinced the United Way, the Mental Health Board, and the Regional Planning Commission to hire a consultant to investigate operations at the Center.

"CCHCC's Board questioned the appropriateness of the two mayors interfering with a private non-profit," according to CCHCC Executive Director Nancy Greenwalt. "If they had concerns about the services being

delivered or the stability of the Center, there were more appropriate ways for determining what problems, if any, existed. You don't grandstand for the media and begin contacting an agency's funders before you determine the facts."

Although the Center would have been justified in refusing to cooperate with what many perceived as a witchhunt, the Health Center's Board of Directors cooperated fully in the investigation by the Asland Group, the consulting firm retained to evaluate the Center. Because the investigation failed to include any input from those who used the Center, the Health Care Consumers conducted a survey of Frances Nelson patients on January 20 to determine client satisfaction. This phone survey showed tremendous support, with 98% of the clients reporting satisfaction with the Center. Frances Nelson presented the results of this survey to the Asland Group and at the Center's Annual Meeting.

The investigation failed to confirm most of accusations about the Center's operation. For example, despite numerous allegations that the Board of Directors was interfering in the day to day operations of the Center, the Asland study found no inappropriate actions on the part of either the Board or the executive committee.

In an attempt to smooth out relations, the Frances Nelson Board, the mayors, and local funders met after the findings were complete with the intention of increasing communication. According to Mayor Satterthwaite, the meeting was a success. "Frances Nelson has a talented and diverse Board of Directors, and everyone involved has the same concerns about providing quality services to the public."

CCHCC Briefs

100/Plus Speakers Bureau Begins

Ruth Baker, Judy Davis, and Belinda Summers will be working out in the field to get new members to join the Champaign County Health Care Consumers and Covenant Medical Center's Medicare 100 and Medicare Plus programs. They will deliver their message to seniors and people with disabilities in east central Illinois. The programs have a lot to offer, are open to anyone with Medicare parts A and B, and cost just \$15.00 a year.

If you would like a representative to speak to your group or have any questions about Medicare 100 and Medicare Plus, please do not hesitate to call Belinda Summers at 352-6533.

CCHCC Bingo Planned

On Saturday, June 1, at 7 pm, CCHCC will be holding a bingo at the Urbana Civic Center. Doors will open at 6:30 for the event. This year's event will feature \$2250 in prizes, with 9 regular bingos of \$100, special games totalling \$850, and a \$500 jackpot. So mark your calendars and unpack your daubers for a night of fun and money at the area's most intense bingo. Volunteers are needed to help with this event. Call Dave at 352-6533 if you've got any questions. Otherwise, we'll see you there!

Door Canvass

This summer our door canvass will be visiting homes in Champaign County to talk to people about the Public Health Department Campaign, as well as our many other programs. So please renew your membership, or make a special contribution when a representative of CCHCC comes to your door.



*Chuck Bell of Consumers Union
(publishers of Consumer Reports)
talking about getting health care
reform back on track.*

1995 CCHCC AWARDS DINNER

Illinois Nurses Society
Elsie Field Provider of the Year

Dr. Scott Anderson
Harry J. Baker Community
Service Award

Allison Davis, WILL-TV
Excellence in Health Care
Reporting

Linda Abernathy
Mike Doyle Activist of the Year

**Regina Kim
& Paul Nelson**
Volunteers of the Year

Senator Paul Simon
Life Time Achievement Award

Senator Vince Demuzio
Legislator of the Year

**The Illinois Dept. of
Professional Regulation**
The Golden Bedpan



Adbook Participants

Illinois Trial Lawyers
Association
The Coalition for Consumer
Rights
Carle Hospital
Illinois Center for Citizen
Involvement
Public Interest Fund of Illinois
Broadside Press
Champaign County
Democrats
C-U Public Health District
The Medicine Shoppe
Prairie Center for Substance
Abuse
Bank One

The Octopus
The Union of Professional
Employees
U of I African American
Studies Program
The Great Impasta
The University YWCA
Common Ground Food
Cooperative
Women's Health Practice
Rogard's
Jerry's IGA
Strawberry Fields
Illini Oil Change
Newtown Flowers
ILGWU/Unite
The C-U Tenant Union

Espresso Royale Cafe
Naomi Jakobsson
PACE, Inc.
Of the People
The Inman
Laurel Prussing for Congress
City of Champaign Human
Relations Council
Frances Nelson Health
Center
Champaign County NOW
Dr. Frank Wrestler
Bank Illinois
First of America Bank
Illinois Education Association
East Central Illinois Area
Agency on Aging, Inc.



*Dr. Scott Anderson visits
representatives of Frances Nelson
after the dinner.*

**On behalf of the Board of Directors, thanks to the Table
Purchasers for the our Annual Awards Dinner:**

Community Health Department, University of Illinois

Francis Nelson Health Center

Illinois Nurses Association

Link Deposit Program, Illinois Center for Citizen Involvement

National Organization for Women

Champaign County Chapter

Of the People

Prussing for Congress

Special Thanks also to the Supporters of the Advocates'

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Table Sponsors

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Katy & Douglas Bushue

Ann & Roy Campbell

Hugh Chandler

Kathleen Cheney

Athan Chilton

Kathleen & Felix Cimakasky

Everett Dade

James Dickey

Elsa & Georges Deschamps

Jerry & Teresa DeWitt

Rina Dochin

Deloris & Earl Evans

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Susan Feldman

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Mary Glasgow

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Carol Huang

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Edith Ingle

James & Anne Kearns

John & Carolyn Kearns

Mary & Ulrich Kruse

David & Anita Lawrance

Dan Lentz

Linda Lindsay

Ann Lowry

Marilyn McCreery

Vera Mainz & Greg Girolami

Marilyn & Fred Mastny

Thom Moore

Carol Neely

Susan & Roger Orban

Jean & James Payne

Julian & Arlene Rappaport

Jim Rounds

Robert Smith

Robert Steltman

Julie & John Wilcox

Susan & David Zola

DPR

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Prior to the vote, Republicans on the Commission were expressing little interest for voting in favor of an investigation. Off the record, several Republican legislators indicated they were receiving pressure from both the Medical Society and Republican leadership not to support the resolution. Because the Legislative Audit Commission is a bi-partisan body, any resolution requires support from both political parties.

As one of the twelve members of the Commission, Representative Rick Winkel (R-Champaign) was noncommittal as the vote approached. However, when CCHCC alerted our members about the upcoming vote, they literally flooded Representative Winkel's office with calls. He quickly got the message, and joined two other Republicans and four Democrats in voting in favor of the investigation.

Afterward, Winkel acknowledged that he received "well over a hundred phone calls, and these folks knew what they were talking about."

The investigation by the Auditor General is expected to be completed by early 1997, just months before the Illinois General Assembly must review the Medical Practices Act, which mandates how the Department should regulate the medical profession. With consumer groups determined to use the findings of the investigation to identify improvements in the law, the Illinois State Medical Society is already trying to maneuver around the investigation. In fact, just three days after the vote, the Medical Society introduced HB2912 (Saviano), which would automatically extend the Medical Practices Act into the year 2007 without any chance for changes.

Noting the importance of this investigation to Illinois consumers, the CCHCC Board recognized the resolution's sponsor, Sen. Vince DeMuzio (D-49), as Legislator of the Year at the Annual Awards Dinner. And to recognize the disservice the IDPR's Medical Division has done to Illinois consumers, the Division was given the Golden Bedpan Award.

Board Member Profile: Judith Jepsen-Popel

by Lynn Crandall



If action isn't Judy Jepsen-Popel's middle name, it should be.

Before her work with Champaign County Health Care Consumers, Jepsen-Popel had already put into action her credo -- "If you see a wrong, you have to take action to right it." With her passion for children, this philosophy has led her to devote innumerable hours working toward improving the world of a child.

Through the years, Jepsen-Popel has served on many boards and committees and worn a variety of titles, including: President of the Paxton Day Care Board, President of Illini Reading Council, a member of Urban Champ's Board, an officer on

the LAN board, President of Paxton Historical Society, President of the Paxton Hospital Auxiliary, Co-Founder of Meals on Wheels in Paxton, President of the board of LEA, Treasurer of the Ludlow Grade School PTO, and more.

With each involvement, her motivation has been to help enrich and improve the lives of children. "I wholeheartedly support the idea that it takes a village to raise a child," she says. "Even my work with the Paxton Historical Society is driven by my belief that children do better if they feel a sense of belonging to a larger group. People need to realize what we do affects the future."

As a teacher at Ludlow Grade School, Jepsen-Popel has seen up close the need for services to help children. Her first contact with CCHCC came during her efforts to bring the School Breakfast program to the LGS children.

But her involvement with CCHCC since has further enlightened her of the serious problems facing children in Champaign County. "I've learned about issues I wasn't aware of, especially the need for rural health services," she says.

And as much as CCHCC has benefited from her contribution, she commends them for being change-makers, and says she derives satisfaction from being part of the organization. "I'm impressed with their spirit of caring. I'm happy to be part of a group of people who are dedicated to making a difference."

Jepsen-Popel grew up in Kankakee, but after marrying Gary, she moved with him to Atlanta,

Georgia, and later to Paxton. During this time, she and her husband enjoyed three family additions -- Ann, Teresa, and Peggy. She devoted much of her time to her family, but later attained her Bachelor's Degree from Georgia State University and her Master's Degree from the U of I. Her daughters are now grown, and have added eight grandchildren to the family tree.

Jepsen-Popel has worked as a teacher for a large part of her life. The Ludlow Grade School children have called her their teacher for fifteen years now. Also, she and her husband own Popel's Ag Center Inc. in Paxton, but other than stopping into the office to mess-up the computer once in awhile, she leaves the fertilizing business to her husband.

When she isn't working or fighting poverty, hunger, and inadequate health care for children, she really likes to get away. Traveling to 16 countries has allowed Jepsen-Popel to meet many interesting people and to enjoy a variety of experiences. Visiting Scandinavia afforded her the opportunity to see her ancestor's birthplace. Describing how she felt, she says, "Standing in the church built in 1100 and seeing where my grandfather was baptized gave me a real nice feeling."

Since there are many situations needing positive changes, it's unlikely Jepsen-Popel will be getting more sleep or extra time to travel in the near future. She'll most often be found at community meetings, board meetings, and other places where she can focus her ambition into action -- acting on behalf of children.

Public Health Dept.

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and genetic and socioeconomic factors. It is in the area of preventing disease and promoting health that a public health department makes its greatest contribution."

Likewise, Gale Fella stressed the necessity for public health services to be provided throughout the entire county. "I'd be a hypocrite if I didn't support the campaign. Public health services are essential to the well-being of the population of Champaign County."

Finally, Mr. Uhlig explained that the IDPH has always supported local health departments, stressing the cost benefits of preventive health services and the effectiveness of providing these services on the local level.

Following the guest speakers was a discussion of the campaign, the specific form the new health department will take, and the potential problems we will face, including how such a department would work and how it would generate funding.

"On the tax issue, there are two major points to consider," according to

Mike Rader, CCHCC Public Health Organizer. "First, the tax will be extremely small; no more than 0.1% of assessed property valuation, which is less than what Champaign Co. residents currently pay for schools, parks, or mass transportation. Second, public health departments in Illinois receive an average of 76% of their funding from the state, which means that Champaign County residents already pay substantial state taxes for services they do not receive. We're confident people will see the cost benefits of public health and vote in favor of the referendum."

Advocate's Advice

Offering consumers assistance with health-related problems is the function of the Consumer Health Hotline. The Advocate's Advice column shares common questions and their solutions.

by Lynn Crandall

Health Insurance Dilemmas

"Sure, my job provides health insurance, but it's bare minimum coverage. I hope nothing serious happens to me or my family."

"I don't have health insurance, and it's impossible for me to pay for it right now."

"The best insurance for the lowest cost -- that's what I need; how do I find it?"

When money is tight, it's tempting to ignore your health insurance needs, hoping for good health. High health care costs pose significant risks for anyone left inadequately covered. A serious illness or accident could deplete your finances if you don't have adequate health care insurance to help shoulder medical expenses. Further studies have shown that the quality of care can also be at risk.

CCHCC encourages consumers to become informed about their health care needs and explore options for health care coverage, so they're not left unprotected.

Understanding Your Health Insurance Needs

Adequate health insurance protects you and your family. It ensures that you and members of your family receive proper care following an accident or during an illness, by providing adequate financial coverage.

Selecting Health Insurance

With many companies and types of policies offering a variety of services, knowing which one to choose can feel confusing. But once you've decided to buy health insurance, selecting a plan that satisfies your personal needs may not be as confusing if you break it down into A, B, C:

- * **Ask questions.** To begin, contact several insurance agencies and ask for information on Hospital, Medical-Surgical, and Major Medical policies. Contact only reputable companies. Also, check with the Illinois Insurance Department at (217) 782-4515. Ask questions such as: What is the deductible? What is the schedule of benefits? What are exclusions? Is there a waiting period? Ask yourself...How much can you afford to spend on health insurance? What are your specific needs for coverage?
- * **Be informed.** Armed with answers to your questions, you can evaluate your options. You may find it helpful to organize your information using a checklist found in the CCHCC self-help packet.
- * **Compare options.** Measure what each policy offers and consider which one best satisfies your health insurance needs at a cost affordable to you.

Take the Time

For a more in-depth look at health insurance, call the Consumer Health Hotline, (217) 352-6533, and ask for the self-help packet called "Selecting Health Insurance." It provides a definition of terms you may encounter during your search for health insurance, thorough descriptions of various types of policies, as well as worksheets to help you organize your comparison shopping.

Discovering which health insurance plan best fits your needs is worth taking the time to do. It could save you money, prevent financial problems, and protect your health.

Get involved! To be active in making changes, please join us today! Call (217) 352-6533.

Dental Referral Program Celebrates Expansion Success

by Lynn Crandall

In response to requests for their participation, three more area dentists have agreed to participate in the Dental Referral Program and treat low-income patients. Alisa Simon, who worked on the recruitment, said "I feel great that we've been able to recruit more dentists. With more dentists, we're better able to meet the needs of patients."

By connecting needy patients with dentists willing to provide care on a sliding-fee scale, the Program helps ensure these residents have access to dental care.

Each participating dentist is asked to treat no more than three Dental Referral patients per month. With only two participating dentists, only four to six people were able to be helped per month. Recruitment efforts have enabled the program to be able to help 12-15 clients monthly because of the five dentists now in the program. To use the Dental Referral Program, or for more information, contact Peg Lalinsky at 352-6533.

CCHCC MEMBERSHIP FORM

(Please clip out and return with your membership dues.)

Enclosed is my check for: \$ _____

\$50 - Friends of CCHCC

\$36 - Family Membership/Adopt-A-Senior

\$25 - Individual Membership

\$15 - Seniors Citizens/Students/Fixed Income

Change of Address:

Name/Phone: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Contributions to CCHCC are tax-deductible.

Please return to: CCHCC, 44 E. Main, Suite 208, Champaign, IL 61820

Public Health Department Coalition Meets

On Tuesday, February 20, Health Care Consumers held its first Public Health Coalition meeting at the Champaign Public Library Auditorium. Approximately 50 people attended to hear presentations from three speakers: Bill Creswell, former Head of the Department of Community Health at the University of Illinois; Gale Fella, Director of the Champaign-Urbana Public Health District; and Fred Uhlig, Regional Director of the Illinois Department of Public Health. The purpose of the meeting was to kick off the coalition's Public Health Campaign, which will work towards establishing a Champaign County Public Health Department through a referendum on the 1996 ballot.

Champaign is the largest of only

County Wide Public Health Department Resolution

- * WHEREAS, Champaign County is one of only eight counties in the state of Illinois that does not have a county wide public health department;
- * WHEREAS, each dollar spent on public health saves \$3.27 in additional health care expenses;
- * WHEREAS, the following public health services are provided to the residents of the cities of Champaign and Urbana, but not to residents of the rest of Champaign County: Public health nursing services to persons of all ages; Dental and school physical exams for children; Food service inspections; Surveillance to monitor and control the spread of communicable disease;
- * THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that

supports the effort to establish a Champaign County Public Health Department to make health education, prevention, and public health monitoring available to the entire county.

Signed _____

Date: _____

Please show support for this important issue by checking one or both:

- ☐ Yes, I will be attending the coalition meetings.
☐ Yes, let me know about other ways I can help this campaign.

Name _____

Phone: _____

Address _____



Presenters Fred Uhlig, Regional Director of the Illinois Dept. of Public Health., and Gale Fella, Director of the C-U Public Health District, along with Board Vice-Chair Chuck Segard, field questions at the public health coalition meeting.

eight counties in Illinois without a public health department. This is an unhealthy and financially irresponsible situation: The IDPH recently conducted a study which found that every dollar spent on public health saves \$3.27 in further medical treatment costs. These factors have prompted the Health Care Consumers to build a coalition of health-care providers, concerned citizens, social service organizations, and elected officials to run a petition campaign to expand public health services throughout the county.

The groundwork began last December, as staff members started holding outreach meetings with prominent local citizens. From the beginning, we have received enthusiastic endorsements from representatives throughout the county.

The main topics at the Coalition Meeting stressed the importance of public health, the local perspective on public health, and the cost effectiveness of public health services. Bill Creswell explained the function and role of public health: "The true determinants of ill health are unsafe environments, unhealthy lifestyles,

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