NCQA's 2005 Health Quality Awards Bridge the Political Divide

NCQA held its 2005 Health Quality Awards event this past week, bringing together executives, opinion leaders and other notables from the worlds of health care, business, entertainment and public policy. All told, more that 350 guests were on hand to celebrate the accomplishments of this year's awardees - Hillary Clinton, Newt Gingrich, Mary Tyler Moore, Brent James, M.D., and Marion Nestle, Ph.D. Also in attendance was special guest David Brailer, M.D., the nation's first National Coordinator for Health Information Technology.

Awardees are selected each year based on their dedication to improving health care quality. This year's awardees made contributions in many different areas ranging from crusading against obesity to promoting the adoption of health information technology to proposing legislation to improve clinical quality.

The awards, held only every other year, regularly draw an eclectic mix of individuals including the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Surgeon General, Senators, Representatives and a former U.S. Treasurer.

The evening's first awardee was Mary Tyler Moore, who in addition to being one of America's best known and best loved actors, also serves as the international chairman of the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation. Ms. Moore has devoted extensive energy and time to promote diabetes research, lobbying Congress on the issue repeatedly. To read Ms. Moore's acceptance speech or view a video about her fight against juvenile diabetes, please click on the following: video | remarks

The second awardee was Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY), who has long been a strong advocate for quality, affordable health care for all Americans. She has played important roles in successful efforts to increase access to safe pediatric medications and led a successful effort to include comparative effectiveness studies as part of the new Medicare law. More recently, she proposed bi-partisan legislation that would raise quality of care through increased use of information technology in medicine. Senator Clinton is frequently discussed as a potential Presidential candidate in 2008. video | remarks

Next was former House Speaker Newt Gingrich. Mr. Gingrich is the Founder of the Center for Health Transformation, a team of public and private sector leaders working together to improve health care outcomes and lower costs. While in the House, Mr. Gingrich helped save Medicare from bankruptcy, prompted FDA reform to help the seriously ill, and initiated a new focus on research, prevention and wellness. video | remarks

The evening’s fourth honoree was Marion Nestle, Ph.D. Dr. Nestle recently appeared in the Academy Award nominated documentary Super Size Me, where she offered her insights into how food manufacturers and the food lobby work to encourage Americans to overeat, resulting in the current obesity epidemic. Dr. Nestle, the Paulette Goddard professor of nutrition at New York University is the author of Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health. video | remarks
The final honoree was Dr. Brent James, Vice President for Medical Research at Intermountain Health Care (IHC). IHC has long been recognized as among the nation's "most wired" health plans and as a leader in providing physicians with electronic clinical decisions support systems. Dr. James lead the effort to adopt these systems at IHC and has spent years researching and advocating for practice systems that help ensure health care quality. [video | remarks]

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2000 L Street, NW, Suite 500 | Washington, DC 20036