

Panel of Experts to Address Health Care Reform Sept. 8

Contributed by Jennifer Farish
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OXFORD, Miss. - National health care reform is a major topic being discussed as voters prepare to elect a new president, but many are still wondering where the candidates stand on this issue.

This question is to be addressed when a panel of health care experts present the program "National Health Care Reform: Moving from Treatment to Prevention" Monday (Sept. 8) at the University of Mississippi.

The free, public event is set for 7 p.m. in Fulton Chapel. It is among dozens of UM programs planned to prepare students and local audiences for the first 2008 presidential debate, to be hosted at UM Sept. 26. For a complete list, see <http://www.olemiss.edu/debate/calendar/>.

Panelists include John Clymer, president of Partnership for Prevention, which developed a framework for health reform that presidential candidates and congressional leaders are using as they formulate their proposals.

"Health care is one of voters' top concerns," Clymer said. "This forum will address the twin challenges of making America a healthier nation and making quality, affordable health care accessible to every American who works hard and plays by the rules."

The panelists will look at issues related to moving the U.S. health care system toward prevention as opposed to treatment models, said Marie Barnard, assistant dean in the School of Applied Sciences.

Because national rates of obesity are on the rise, with an expected similar increase in related chronic diseases, policymakers should be leading the way in designing new systems of care, coverage and prevention, Barnard said.

Sponsored by the Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease, the panel features three main speakers in addition to Clymer, who will discuss keeping Americans healthy while controlling health care costs.

They are Therese Hanna, executive director of the Mississippi Health Policy Center, will make an introductory statement and issue a charge for national movement on this issue; Dr. Steven Blair, sponsored by the American College of Sports Medicine, will address health care policy issues associated with physical activity; and Dr. Evelyn Crayton, a representative of the American Dietetic Association, who plans to address policy issues related to nutrition.

Also, the university has invited each of the presidential campaigns to send a representative to participate in the discussion.

"National health care reform has emerged as an important topic for the 2008 presidential race," said Mark Loftin, chair of UM's Department of Health, Exercise Science and Recreation Management. "Paramount to reform is a shift from treatment to prevention. Mississippi leads the nation in many unhealthy behaviors, including the highest level of obesity."

The panel discussion will focus on obesity issues, including the role of energy input (food intake) and energy output

(physical activity) as preventive measures, Loftin said.

The goal of the panel discussion is to make a national case for the need to broaden the health care policy debate to focus on the role of prevention in the health care system.

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