

Message from the Executive Vice President for Medical Affairs



As an academic medical center, we are fortunate to have a new president, Mary Sue Coleman, Ph.D., who is not only familiar with health systems but, as a scientist herself, is committed to ensuring that our research, educational and clinical programs fulfill their potential. As co-chair of the Institute of Medicine's Committee on the Consequences of Uninsurance, she has an informed and important perspective on the current status of health care delivery. Michigan's prospects for leadership in the biomedical sciences, as well as health care delivery, have never been stronger.

In that context, it is an honor and privilege to have been asked to serve as interim executive vice president for medical affairs for the University while the search for a permanent EVPMA is conducted. I want to express my appreciation to Gil Omenn, M.D., Ph.D., and his staff for making the transition so seamless. President Coleman has made filling the vacancy a priority on her agenda, and an active search is underway. Meanwhile, I am committed to maintaining and further improving the Health System's strength and standing during my time as interim EVPMA.

Our patients convey appreciation for the quality of their medical care but also admit to frustration over the difficulty they experience navigating the system. It seems the excellence of individual units is not matched by how the units relate to one another. We want a truly integrated health system through which patients can move easily, from ready access through diagnostic studies to effective treatment.

To address this and other important issues, I have restructured and simplified the U-M Health System's planning and management. The core is a Clinical Executive Group consisting of the dean of the Medical School, Hospital executive director, chief financial officer, the executive director of M-CARE, and myself. We involve the leadership of Nursing, the Faculty Group Practice, the clinical departments, Medical School and Hospital administration, and the Executive Group for implementation and further strategic planning in a group called the Senior Leadership Council.

Each year as part of ongoing quality improvement, and to meet certain accreditation requirements, M-CARE compiles measurements of clinical quality and member satisfaction. Results are measured against several hundred health plans around the country that compile the same data. Based on 2001 data, 13 of the 19 measures we track regularly were at or above benchmark, which puts M-CARE

in the 90th percentile nationally. Overall, our results for clinical quality and member satisfaction are outstanding and were an important factor in maintaining our National Committee for Quality Assurance Excellent accreditation this year. This impressive standing distinguishes M-CARE in the marketplace with employers and individuals alike. General Motors granted M-CARE benchmark status for 2003, the third year in a row. This year we are one of only nine (out of 90) plans across the country to receive this designation. Plans that have benchmark status typically have the lowest employee contribution while offering the highest quality care.

Moody's Investors Service recently assigned an AA financial rating to the U-M Hospitals and Health Centers. In assigning this rating, Moody's cited the Health System's preeminent reputation, well-developed interrelationship with the Medical School and faculty practice plan, strong liquidity and balance sheet, and a stable operating performance.

In education, our core mission, the Medical School faculty approved a new curriculum on September 19 that will be launched with the incoming class in 2003. The curriculum, detailed in the cover story of this issue of *Medicine at Michigan* (page 18), combines enhanced integration of the biomedical and behavioral sciences with an earlier exposure to clinical activities. Earlier access to electives will also help students make better-informed career choices.

Our many successful research programs continue to enrich the experience of a variety of undergraduate, graduate and post-doctoral students. These opportunities will be considerably enhanced with the completion of the Life Sciences Institute late in 2003 and the Medical School's Biomedical Sciences Research Building in 2005.

While we take great pride in our performance, we recognize the need for continued improvement. With our increasing culture of collaboration in research and learning, we can continue to excel and remain one of the nation's top academic health centers. Though we will always face challenges, the future of medicine at Michigan is extraordinarily promising.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lazar J. Greenfield". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small "no." at the end.

Lazar J. Greenfield
Interim Executive Vice President for
Medical Affairs