Troubling Data on the Health of Americans: Public Policies Under the Radar

DAVID McQUEEN

Dr. David McQueen is a global health consultant. He is past President of the International Union of Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE). In March 2011, he retired from 20 years at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, where he served as Associate Director for Global Health Promotion. He has contributed extensively to the development of public health and has always been very outspoken about the need to apply evidence-based health promotion strategies to address chronic diseases worldwide.

Last January, a panel of experts published a report on the health of Americans. Its title speaks volumes about the data collected: *U.S. Health in International Perspective: Shorter Lives, Poorer Health*. The report presents a comparative analysis of health indicators that show the United States lags behind other industrialized nations. Given the high level of spending on health care, explanations for the U.S. health disadvantage must lie elsewhere. According to the committee, public policies should be examined and successful initiatives used as a source of inspiration. Dr. McQueen was a member of this expert panel. Drawing from these findings and his vast global experience in research and public health, he will show how, when health is made central to policy making, it can help achieve the goal of reducing inequalities.