

# Seeking Cures for the World's Ills

OVER THE PAST SEVEN YEARS, more than \$35 billion has been committed to fighting the diseases of the world's poor, yet infectious diseases continue to claim the lives of some 13 million people each year, accounting for 50 percent of deaths in developing countries. The chief reason, according to experts, is the lack of linkage between numerous and varied relief efforts.

"There is no effective architecture of global health," explains Jo Ivey Boufford, M.D., Professor of Public Service, Health Policy, and Management at NYU's Wagner Graduate School of Public Service. "There are multiple intergovernmental organizations, thousands of nongovernmental organizations and national, multilateral, and foundation donors, and special initiatives, but because so many are single-issue groups, the challenge is achieving greater synergy at a global level."

To help bridge the gap between the haves and the have-nots, NYU has launched a Master's Program in Global Public Health. The program will prepare professionals with advanced degrees in various disciplines to take leadership roles in promoting global health through improved research, practice, and policymaking.

The program is the only one of its kind in the country to focus exclusively on global public health. It's also the first at NYU to harness the expertise and resources of multiple schools. The University considers this collaborative effort among the schools of Medicine, Dentistry, Social Work, Education,



and Public Service a model for research, education, and service in the field of global public health. More than 60 faculty members are participating, contributing expertise in fields ranging from human rights to toxicology.

The program's Co-Directors are Dr. Boufford, who is also Clinical Professor of Pediatrics, and Karen P. Day, Ph.D., Chairwoman of the Department of Medical Parasitology and Professor of Medicine. With their colleagues, they are seeking to build "connective tissue" among existing disciplines rather than to create a new discipline in its own right. The new endeavor, they explain, is "global" (versus "international"), because it is not just about going "over there" but also about addressing migration issues and problems here at home.

"There is tremendous interest among young people," says Dr. Day. "They want to help. In fact, they

sought us out. The faculty are excited too, and we're all giving it our utmost."

"What we've accomplished," says Robert Berne, Ph.D., NYU's Senior Vice President for Health, "is to take the nation's largest private university and minimize the boundaries between our schools. This means that our students have the entire university at their disposal. We expect other schools to join us as they see the value of this."

In addition to studying seven core courses in basic public health competencies, ethics, informatics, and qualitative/field research methods, students must complete 150 hours of fieldwork and a yearlong capstone project, in which teams of students diagnose and address a real-world problem.

The first group begins classes this fall. Its members represent numerous disciplines: law, medicine, nursing, dentistry, economics, international relations, education, social work, and public policy. One in four of the class hails from abroad.

NYU School of Medicine has been in the vanguard of public health since the 1860s, when one of its physicians, Stephen Smith, M.D., undertook the first survey of health conditions in New York City, leading to the creation of the Department of Health. He later became the first president of the American Public Health Association. In 2000 Dean & CEO Robert M. Glickman, M.D., established the School's Institute for Urban and Global Health, now led by Dr. Day. ●

—Dee Nelson