



THE DONALD H. GEMSON 2011 CANCER PREVENTION PUBLIC POLICY AWARD

Background

The Eastern Division of the American Cancer Society is accepting nominations for the second annual Donald H. Gemson, Cancer Prevention Public Policy Award. This award recognizes leadership in broad-based policy change in the fight against cancer, a cause that Don Gemson, MD, MPH, an ACS board member, physician, public health advocate, Columbia University professor and corporate health leader, embraced throughout his vibrant career.

Award Criteria

The award recognizes an individual who exemplifies the spirit and work of Don Gemson and the Eastern Division in developing, advocating, advancing and/or implementing prevention-focused policies and practices to reduce the incidence and burden of cancer. These policies and activities should be aligned with the Board's official mission outcomes; consistent with science/evidence based strategy; and population reaching in their impact. These may involve government action, community-based activities or wide-ranging changes at other institutions, such as businesses, unions, or hospitals. Special attention will be paid to the impact on high-risk populations, and the potential for reducing health disparities.

Eligibility & Process

Individuals who influence policy within the states of New Jersey and New York are eligible for the award. Public and elected officials, advocates and community leaders, as well as decision-makers and difference-makers in business, health care and labor are all considered.

Nominations will be reviewed by a committee appointed by the chair of the Eastern Division Board of Directors, and a winner recommended to the Board. A call for nominations is issued annually.

Nomination Deadline

Completed applications must be received no later than February 21, 2011.

Don Gemson, M.D.

Don Gemson spent his career focused on a preventive health agenda, devoted to the proposition that our communities have it within their power to help residents prevent disease and improve their health. This is overwhelmingly the case with cancer, and steps to strengthen prevention activities are paramount to the success of the American Cancer Society.

Dr. Gemson's work focused strongly on high risk populations, people without access to regular medical care, without insurance, with high incidences of smoking and other high risk behaviors, with high rates of inadequately treated cancer.

As a physician, Dr. Gemson was involved with the Harlem Prevention Center, a CDC-funded public health initiative managed by the Harlem Hospital Center, where he brought both his medical training and his strong sense of social justice to the task. Dr. Gemson felt very strongly

about the role of public health in reducing health disparities among high-risk populations and about focusing interventions on our most vulnerable populations - the indigent, uninsured, and non-English speaking.

Dr. Gemson understood the importance of population reaching interventions by working through worksites, health systems, and strategic alliances. For instance, he devoted significant time and energy to government policy efforts (with state and local government) and large business systems. He was a leader in the area of corporate wellness and modeled this through his work as Corporate Medical Director for Merrill Lynch. He also played an important role in the development of the consulting tool which is used in the American Cancer Society's Workplace Solutions package to evaluate corporate policies and practices supporting healthy worker behavior in terms of healthy eating, being physically active, and avoiding tobacco and assuring that workers have adequate health insurance and access to screening.

Dr. Gemson chaired the New York City Coalition on Smoking or Health and was a member of the NYS Tobacco Use Prevention and Control Advisory Board. These groups laid the foundation for establishing the Eastern Division as a leader in tobacco control policy with high cigarette taxes, the strongest clean indoor air policies in the country and a well-funded, effective state tobacco control program (in New York State).

Dr. Gemson devoted his career to the proposition that progress in prevention is possible, on a population-wide basis, and that government and private sector institutions have an opportunity and responsibility to respond to the problem of cancer.

For further information, please contact:

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