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Health Coverage Fellowship Chooses Class for 2008

BOSTON – Ten medical journalists from across New England today are being named to the 2008 class of the Health Coverage Fellowship.

The fellowship, the first of its kind in the country, is designed to help the New England media do a better job covering critical health care issues. It does that by bringing in as speakers more than 50 top health officials, policy people, and researchers. It also brings the fellows out to watch first-hand how the system works, from walking the streets at night with mental health case workers to riding a Medflight helicopter.

The program, now entering its seventh year, is sponsored by the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation, with help from the Maine Health Access Foundation, Connecticut Health Foundation and New Hampshire's Endowment for Health.

The fellowship will run for nine days, beginning April 25. It is housed at Babson College's Center for Executive Education in Wellesley, and is operated in collaboration with the region's leading journalism organizations. Larry Tye, who covered medicine and health at the *Boston Globe* for 15 years, directs the program. A former Nieman Fellow and author of four books, Tye has taught journalism at Boston University, Northeastern, Tufts and Harvard.

The 2008 class includes Martha Bebinger of WBUR, freelance reporter Guillermo Bleichmar, MariAn Gail Brown of the *Connecticut Post*, Dianne Finch of New Hampshire Public Radio, Jeffrey Krasner of the *Boston Globe*, Jennifer Lade of the *Standard-Times* in New Bedford, Michael Morton of Community Newspaper Company, Eduardo de Oliveira of the *Brazilian Journal*, Herb Perry of the *York (ME) Weekly* and freelance writer Dr. Diane Shannon.

The fellowship will focus on a series of pressing health care issues, from insuring the uninsured to mental illness, backups in emergency rooms, ethnic and economic disparities in the delivery of care, and environmental health. Attention also will be given to public health scares, from understanding the deadly powers of illnesses like the avian flu to knowing

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the capabilities – and limits – of public health authorities who respond to terrorism and disease outbreaks.

And the teaching does not end when the fellows head back to their stations or papers. Tye, the program director, will be on call for fellows for the full year following their nine days in Wellesley. He will help when they are stuck for ideas, or for whom to call on a story. He will assist in thinking out projects and carving out clearer definitions of beats. He also maintains a web site where fellows post their stories.

The program is operated with help from a steering committee that includes George Donnelly, editor of the *Boston Business Journal*; Sam Fleming, News Director at *WBUR-FM*; Brenda L. Reed, Executive Director of the New England Press Association; and B. Allan Sprague, President of the Massachusetts Broadcasters Association.