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CONTACT

Larry Tye
Director of the Health Coverage Fellowship
(617) 823-5386
larrytye@aol.com

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation's Health Coverage Fellowship Chooses Class for 2009

BOSTON — Ten medical journalists from across the nation today are being named to the 2009 class of the Health Coverage Fellowship.

The fellowship, the first of its kind in the country, is designed to help the 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 eighth year, is sponsored by the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation, with help from the Maine Health Access Foundation, New Hampshire's Endowment for Health, the Northwest Health Foundation, and other non-profits.

The fellowship will run for nine days, beginning May 1. It is housed at Babson College's Center for Executive Education in Wellesley, and is operated in collaboration with 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 five books, Tye has taught journalism at Boston University, Northeastern, Tufts, and Harvard.

The 2009 class includes:

- Jennifer Berryman of WCVB-TV in Boston;
- Andy Dworkin of *The Oregonian*;
- Latoyia Edwards of New England Cable News;
- Megan Hall of WRNI-Radio in Providence;
- Josie Huang of Maine Public Broadcasting;
- Ralph Jimenez of the *Concord Monitor*;
- Aaron Nicodemus of the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette*;

- Glenn O'Neal of *USA Today*;
- Sacha Pfeiffer of WBUR-Radio in Boston;
- Lisa Wangsness of the *Boston Globe*.

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 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 the journalists 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.