



DR. C. EVERETT KOOP, U.S. SURGEON GENERAL

Self-help as a field of study, community engagement concept, book shelf heading, and movement would not be where it is today without the leadership of Dr. C. Everett Koop. A pioneer in pediatric surgery and the nation's most recognizable Surgeon General, Dr. Koop pioneered how the public viewed public health leadership in areas such as tobacco consumption, HIV/AIDS, and self-help. On October 14, 2011, Dr. Koop will celebrate his 95th birthday. In his honor, the *International Journal of Self-Help and Self-Care* provides the following tribute celebrating his leadership.

IN APPRECIATION OF DR. C. EVERETT KOOP

Dr. C. Everett Koop's visionary embrace of self-help/mutual aid arose directly from his experiences as a pediatric surgeon who was performing innovative procedures in trying to find solutions and fixes for very ill children. It was the parents who were able to give support and counsel to other parents that provided an emotional underpinning to the work Dr. Koop was doing. "I believe in self-help as an effective way of dealing with problems, stress, hardship, and pain. . . . Mending people, curing them, is no longer enough; it is only part of the total health care that most people require," Koop said in the Foreword to the Workshop report (1988, p. iii).

Dr. Koop's tangible enthusiasm and support for self-help as mutual aid has had a large ripple effect over the years. In 1987 he sponsored the Surgeon General's Workshop on Self-Help and Public Health, a unique landmark national event that focused on the multitude of groups (groups for all chronic diseases, rare and orphan diseases, and stigmatized social statuses) and their effectiveness in helping afflicted people (parents whose children had diseases, adults with health conditions and their family members and friends) as complements to the professionally-based health care system.

The Surgeon General's Workshop on Self-Help and Public Health highlighted mutual help groups nationally and to the health professionals, policy makers, and practitioners in a way that had never been done before. The Workshop stimulated a vast variety of initiatives only a few of which can be mentioned here:

- A network of social science researchers emerged from the Workshop who were interested in studying autonomous self-help groups on their own terms (instead of lumping them together with professionally facilitated groups that also provide support). The network subsequently connected with the community society section of the American Psychological Association, the Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA) where they now constitute the Self-Help/Mutual Support special interest group.
- Dr. Koop's Office initiated a volunteer citizen-led National Council on Self-Help and Public Health to follow up on the recommendations from the Workshop—especially those meant to inform federal health agencies on the importance of self-help/mutual aid as a complement to the mainstream health care system. The accomplishments of the National Project are detailed by Hannah Hedrick (who represented the American Medical Association) and others (1992).
- A Symposium on the Impact of Life-Threatening Conditions brought together physicians, self-helpers, health professionals, and representatives of professional associations such as the American Medical Association, the American Association of Retired Persons, academic Schools of Public Health, among others in 1989 in Chicago. "Participants advocated a mutual vision: a health care system in which self-help groups are recognized as complements to clinical practice" (Hedrick et al., 1992, p. 28).
- Symposium participants suggested that a book could bring together the innovative ideas across a wide spectrum of groups forthcoming in the event. Dr. Koop wrote the Foreword to the subsequent volume edited by pioneer self-help researcher Alfred Katz and others titled *Self-Help: Concepts and Applications* (1992).
- Another idea emanating from the Symposium was to institute an international journal devoted to research and practice of self-help/mutual aid and self-care. Dr. Alfred Katz worked with Baywood Publishing Company to inaugurate the first issue as Editor of the *International Journal of Self-Help & Self-Care* in 1999 with the assistance of Dr. Keith Humphreys, a psychologist at Stanford University, as Associate Editor.

- It is so appropriate that the *Journal* celebrates the 95th birthday of Dr. Koop with this tribute to his leadership and inspiration since the *Journal's* existence is indirectly due to Dr. Koop. It is further fitting that I host the tribute as I was on the planning committee of the Surgeon General's Workshop on Self-Help and Public Health, directed the grant that funded the National Project for Self-Help and Public Health, have been a nurturer of the network of social science researchers, and now am the Editor of the *Journal*.
- Seven of the Workshop participants are on the Editorial Board of the *Journal* and continue to lead as researchers and practitioners in fostering self-help mutual aid.

REFERENCES

- Hedrick, H. L. Isenberg, D. H., and Martini, C. J. M. (1992). Self-Help Groups: Empowerment through Policy and Partnership. In A. H. Katz, H. L. Hedrick, D. H. Isenberg, L. M. Thompson, T. Goodrich, and A. H. Kutscher (Eds.), *Self-Help: Concepts and Applications* (pp. 3-55). Philadelphia, PA: The Charles Press.
- Katz, A. H., Hedrick, H. L., Isenberg, D. H., Thompson, L. M., Goodrich, T., and Kutscher, A. H. (Eds.). (1992). *Self-Help: Concepts and Applications*. Philadelphia, PA: The Charles Press.
- Koop, C. E. (1988). Foreword. In *The Surgeon General's Workshop on Self-Help and Public Health*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Health Resources and Services Administration. U.S. Government Printing Office-1988-224-250.
- Koop, C. E. (1992). Foreword. In A. H. Katz, H. L. Hedrick, D. H. Isenberg, L. M. Thompson, T. Goodrich, and A. H. Kutscher (Eds.), *Self-Help: Concepts and Applications* (pp. xvii-xviii). Philadelphia, PA: The Charles Press.

Thomasina Borkman, Ph.D.
Professor of Sociology, Emerita, George Mason University
Editor, International Journal of Self Help & Self Care
National Project on Self Help and Public Health, member
Former member, planning committee Surgeon General's
Workshop on Self-Help and Public Health

IN TRIBUTE TO DR. C. EVERETT KOOP

Before the 1980s, we who became community self-helpers formed support or mutual aid groups to help ourselves and one another at a time when the medical system and environment did not recognize our value of helping ourselves. Before then, very few people living in the USA even knew of the role and position of US Surgeon General, the nation's top medical officer. Thankfully, Dr. Koop as Surgeon General (1982-89) changed that paradigm and awoke the American public to the empowering capacity that had been bubbling up in communities across this great nation. Self-help for the public's health was a concept so foreign

a utility even our leading clinicians and researchers questioned. But with Dr. Koop's foresight and focus through the "moral suasion" and power of the Office, self-help received legitimacy and credibility in short order.

I am honored to have served as the 1st Chair of Dr. Koop's National Council on Self-Help and Public Health, an immediate and direct offshoot of the Workshop held in 1987. We were charged with implementing the Workshop recommendations, and advising Dr. Koop and the Public Health Service (PHS) on strategic ways to incorporate self-help concepts and community groups into the fabric of the Federal government's public health work. A major initiative was to educate the branches of the PHS on the concepts of self-help, the potential role of self-help groups to partner and indeed, collaborate with granting agencies to improve the health of the public, and to encourage them to tap into the power of community. We facilitated researchers to connect and leverage their work in the new field, and we provided a national focus for clearinghouses to enhance the outreach of community groups as resources for anyone in need. In addition, for the very first time, the Council recommended that the Surgeon General take a bold step to reach the public directly through a Public Service Announcement extolling the virtues of community-based self-help. Some of you may remember the first time you saw that PSA. I certainly recall it. Even though the Council helped Dr. Koop craft the content and knew the details of its public release, upon seeing it on my own TV, I cried from pure excitement and honest relief of the sense of legitimacy and massive outreach and education that those 30 second spots provided to community leaders and the public.

Today, among the top buzz words in public health are "patient-centered care." Every medical system, pharmaceutical and device company, academic and research center, practitioner, and community and patient organization strives to listen to and embody the voice of the people they choose to target. We honor Dr. Koop for his out-of-the-box thinking and visionary leadership in self-help. Today's patient-centered care is the offspring of Dr. Koop's leadership in self-help. I am out of a wheelchair today (from rheumatoid arthritis) and working internationally because Dr. Koop believed in my humble role as a self-helper. We each owe it to Dr. Koop to continue this growth and belief in the empowering concepts of helping ourselves as we help others. It is now a part of my DNA. Is it yours?

*Amye L. Leong, MBA
President & CEO, Healthy Motivation
Spokesperson, The Rheumatology Network, Health Focus Media
Former International Spokesperson, United Nations Bone and Joint Decade
Former Chair, National Council on Self-Help and Public Health
Invited Participant, Surgeon General's Workshop on Self-Help and Public Health
Santa Barbara, California and Paris, France
amyel@healthymotivation.com*

Dr. C. Everett Koop, as Surgeon General, did more than anyone to legitimize self-help and support groups especially among those in the medical community. When asked to be on the Surgeon General's Council on Self-Help and Public Health, I was the Director of the Self-Help Network, a statewide self-help group clearinghouse and research center at Wichita State University, and was working hard with our medical community and the emerging managed care system with little success. That changed dramatically with Dr. Koop's endorsement and rationale for self-help and support groups. The influential Surgeon General's Workshop on Self-Help and Public Health and the report that followed provided a legitimacy that encouraged physicians to accept and embrace self-help and support groups like nothing else could have. Dr. Koop's legacy continues to this day having provided the critical support of an expanding self-help movement at just the right time in our history.

*Greg Meissen, Ph.D.
Professor of Psychology & Coordinator
Community Psychology Doctoral Program
Founder, Self-Help Network: Center for Community Support & Research
Wichita State University
Former member, National Council on Self-Help & Public Health*

It is with deep gratitude that I honor Dr. Koop for his understanding of the concept of self-help and the value of support groups. He turned his understanding into action and created the "National Workshop on Self-Help and Public Health." He is a true Pioneer.

*Lee Miller
SHARE, Inc., New York City
Coordinator of Special Projects
Former member, National Council on Self-Help & Public Health*

Hopefully the twentieth century will be known for the birth of thousands of self-help support groups across the USA, and the strong voice of one preeminent public servant who recognized their potential for improving the health of Americans. Through his personal courage, experience, and his belief in the ability of the human spirit to rise above adversity, Dr. Koop's efforts increased professional awareness of their benefits, and in the process, helped energize the self-help group movement itself.

*Ed Madara, Director
New Jersey & American Self-Help Group Clearinghouses
Saint Clare's Health System, Dover, NJ
www.selfhelpgroups.org*

I write in celebration of the 95th birthday of Dr. C. Everett Koop. His inclusion of self help in the methodology of public health served as both inspiration and legitimation for service providers, researchers, scholars and policy makers. We are all indebted to his visionary leadership.

*Julian Rappaport, Ph.D.
Emeritus Professor of Psychology
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Former member, National Council on Self-Help & Public Health*

Dr. Koop was my mentor and role model. He demonstrated how to communicate with compassion. He taught me that when patients and family members have information they can trust, understand, and use, they can better manage their health as partners with their health practitioner.

*Allen I. Goldberg, MD, Master FCCP
Past-President, American College of CHEST Physicians*

As we were trying to get funding for SHARE!'s self-help clearinghouse and self-help center, local officials would see the quotes we included from C. Everett Koop and take another look at our programs. I don't think we would have been funded without such strong, reputable support for self-help support groups. Of course we didn't include that he personally benefited from self-help groups, because the local officials would have immediately discounted him, but that made us know that he really was one of us and understood the power of the groups.

*Ruth Hollman
Founder/Executive Director
SHARE! the Self-Help And Recovery Exchange
Los Angeles, California*

The contribution of his presence—his stature, bearing, and confidence—was of immense importance to the self-help movement.

*Thomas J. Powell, Ph.D.
Professor of Social Work
University of Michigan*

Your life's work in eliminating health disparities was unique in that it resulted in national recognition of the contributions of self-help groups to public health. When we approached you about devoting a Surgeon General's Workshop to that topic, you responded "I believe in self-help groups as an effective way of dealing with problems, stress, hardship, and pain. . . ."

We are tremendously grateful that you managed to keep the National Council on Self-Help and Public Health alive during your tenure as Surgeon General.

*Daryl Holtz Isenberg, Ph.D.
Illinois Self-Help Coalition
Chicago Illinois*

Dr. Koop provided excellent leadership and effectively promoted self-help. The national conference on self-help which he envisioned and facilitated moved the field forward and generated a great deal of energy and creativity.

*Louis J. Medvene, Ph.D.
Professor of Psychology
Wichita State University*

Surgeon General C. Everett Koop has illuminated the entire environment of self-help studies and movements worldwide and his contributions and leadership should be respected and triumphed.

*Wai-Tong, Chien
Professor, School of Nursing
Faculty of Health & Social Sciences
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University*

Since working with Dr. Koop on disability advocacy issues (before he was Surgeon General), our personal and professional passions intersected at many points: home care for ventilator-dependent infants, tobacco control, HIV/AIDS awareness and peer support, cultural competence, to name a few. Each of these passions involved an emphasis on peer support or mutual aid; Dr. Koop was instrumental in getting a national spotlight on the contributions of peer support to public health in many venues, including the Surgeon General's Workshop and the resultant National Council on Self-Help and Public Health.

His inspiration and support motivate me daily in my "Self-Care/Peer Support" program for people with diabetes and other chronic conditions (DVD and text available). Much of my nomination for a "Purpose Prize" reflects projects with Dr. Koop. No one has touched my life more positively or more deeply.

*Hannah Hedrick
Aloha Self-Care/Peer Support
(Programs across the mainland and in Hawaii)
Former member, National Council on Self-Help and Public Health*