

**Date: September 27, 2005**

**To: Physicians of the Commissioned Corps**

**Colleagues:**

As the Chief Medical Officer of the United States Public Health Service (USPHS), I am writing to share some thoughts and request your help on matters of importance to the medical category and the entire Commissioned Corps.

As of today, there are 1,093 officers in the Medical Category. Approximately 140 of you responded to the first letter I sent in June to all the physicians of the Commissioned Corps. Many excellent suggestions were made, and I thank every one of you who offered them. Though I may not be able to implement all of them, your suggestions will serve to improve our category as well as our Service. I continue to look forward to receiving more ideas.

I have had the pleasure of meeting many of you during promotion ceremonies and other venues. I look forward to meeting more of you as I make my way to the numerous locations within the Public Health Service where medical officers are assigned.

By virtue of the high esteem afforded our profession and the extraordinary capabilities of our officers, physicians are in the forefront of the day-to-day management of programs within the USPHS as well as the efforts to educate and inform the nation regarding the public health challenges it faces now and will face in the future. Beyond a commitment to the public's health in general, medical officers are also committed to the principles that lie at the heart of our nation, including, service and a willingness to sacrifice for others. But, leadership is defined by more than commitments to principles. It is framed by actions.

Since my last letter to you, much has happened to directly affect the medical category and the entire Commissioned Corps, the most significant of which has been the largest deployment in the history of the Commissioned Corps in response to the unprecedented devastation caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. We all know that there is more to the Corps than deployments – that every day we contribute as a Category and as a Service to the health and well-being of the nation. But during times of extraordinary stress, our willingness to serve and sacrifice in extraordinary ways is measured by a different standard. The response to Hurricane Katrina and Rita has highlighted the collective character of our Category and has demonstrated that we possess the necessary traits, experience and proven ability to carry the banner of the Corps, not just describe how it should be carried. To date, 263 medical officers have deployed in direct response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and more are standing ready to do so. Equally important are the contributions of those medical officers who assumed greater amounts of work so their colleagues could deploy.

Alas, we are only a few days away from an important milestone. The Commissioned Corps has committed as a Service to reach 70% readiness by the end of this fiscal year, which ends at midnight September 30<sup>th</sup>. The Commissioned Corps is currently at 68% readiness. As a result of near heroic efforts orchestrated by our very diligent and capable Physician Professional Advisory Committee, our category has made significant improvements in this regard. Our category stands at 60.1 % ready to be deployed. Of those still not meeting readiness standards, 147 medical officers need only 1 or 2 elements in order to do so. I suspect many of you need only to properly record your appropriate information in the Officer Summary Page on the CCRF website. I encourage every each of you to log into the website and assure that all pertinent readiness information is recorded there. The web site address is: <http://ccrf.hhs.gov/ccrf>. Recording your data on the CCRF website not only will help us meet the 70% Service readiness standard, it will also signal your availability to deploy.

I learned today that despite the tremendous response by our Category and the Commissioned

Corps, there is still an urgent need for more clinicians, especially physicians, to deploy as part of the ongoing and still critical public health and clinical care efforts being made in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi. Unless more clinicians can be identified, those that have already deployed for these Hurricanes may be asked to do so again. Even those that are still missing 1 or 2 elements in order to meet basis readiness standards may be called upon to serve in this unique disaster. I am confident that however we are tasked, the physicians of the Commissioned Corps will serve admirably.

Again, I welcome your thoughts and ideas and can be reached by email at [david.rutstein@osophs.dhhs.gov](mailto:david.rutstein@osophs.dhhs.gov) or by telephone at (240) 453-8280. I am honored to represent all of you and look forward to our continued dialogue as we work, together, to advance the Medical Category, the Commissioned Corps and the health and safety of the nation.

All the best,

CAPT David Rutstein  
Chief Medical Officer, USPHS