

Tribute to Sir Kenneth Standard

Sir Kenneth Standard came to The University of the West Indies (UWI) 70 years ago as one of the first medical students. Before coming to UWI he had been a teacher and this passion for teaching would be the hallmark of his medical and academic career.

After graduating he initially returned to Barbados, the land of his birth, and began practicing his other passion, Community Medicine. Professor Standard, from early on, was way ahead of his time recognizing the importance of Community Health and that health was a product of all stages of life and so he focussed on the nutrition of children.

But teaching remained his calling and he returned to UWI, and specifically the Mona Campus, where he impacted the lives of many generations of public health practitioners. He became Head of Department in 1968, of what was then known as Social and Preventative Medicine, now Community Health and Psychiatry, and pioneered teaching and training in Public Health beginning with introducing Community Health into the undergraduate programme and introducing Master's level training for post-graduates. Professor Standard believed passionately in the team approach to health as evidenced by the programmes he initiated. The Community Health Aides' (CHA) programme was one of his earliest programmes. Today, the CHA still remains a fundamental member of the primary healthcare team, now 40 years later and this is a tribute to him. He was ahead of his time in recognizing the critical role of health promotion and many years later, in fact at the 100th anniversary of its founding in 2002, the Pan American Health

Organization (PAHO) named Sir Kenneth Standard one of eleven "Public Health Heroes of the Americas" in recognition of his pioneering work in public health. As a truly Caribbean national he also insisted that post graduate public health and the Master of Public Health degree programme, begun in 1985, should continue to train public health practitioners from all health and health-related disciplines.

His belief in community led him to recognize the importance of empowering persons and he, along with his close friend Dr Owen Minott, began a programme on 'Health Education for All' using all forms of media to communicate messages and using all members of the health team to transmit messages. Staff singing health messages in the waiting room engaging persons waiting is an indelible memory.

One of Professor Standard's mantras was that he had achieved what he had because others allowed him to stand on their shoulders. In all of his work he found time to reach out, encourage and mentor young public health practitioners allowing them to stand on his shoulders.

Many of us today share his passion and love for public health because he took the time to nurture us. When PAHO named him a 'Public Health Hero of the Americas', they were confirming what many of us knew because Professor Standard was and remains our hero. His name is still on our lips as we often refer to him and rely on the Principles of Public Health he left behind and inculcated into us.

*Professor Denise Eldemire-Shearer
Director, Mona Ageing and Wellness Centre*

In The Words of Sir Kenneth Standard



“It has been my privilege and humble honor to have worked as a member of a team with many giants in the public health field during the 40 years from my graduation in 1955 to my retirement in 1995. Any success I had, any contribution I was able to make, was facilitated by many persons who encouraged and supported me, and by the strength I derived from my spiritual beliefs. Persons who contributed included my family, especially my wife, Evelyn; my friends; my colleagues and other members of the community of The University of the West Indies; members of the health team in the ministries of the Caribbean region and in the field; and the

many persons and organizations nationally, regionally and internationally that touched my life in many ways.

As we stand at the dawn of the 21st Century, the public health priorities may have changed, but the need for a strong and dedicated public health team remains unchanged. It is my hope and expectation that the new generation of public health workers will take the baton and carry it to greater heights”.

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