

Health Education and A Value System

By
C. Everett Koop, MD, ScD
Surgeon General
And
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health

Keynote Address to the conference on Adolescent Health
Sponsored by the National Catholic Education Association'
And the March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation
South Bend, Indiana
June 19, 1983

This lecture starts with my acknowledgment of the trinity of mind, emotions, and spirit, and my congratulations to the participants whose job is not an easy one. I started by asking the question that perhaps we had not shown the leadership that young people expect of us and what should we do about it. The "us" I referred to is, those of us who are in medicine, healthcare, and those, of the audience, in education. I outlined two tracks on which our children have been going: the first, that of being introduced too quickly, too early, and too casually into the complex world of adult life. Second, had to do with the problems that have arisen by trying to catch up with them, rather than anticipate and prepare for them.

I went back to the launch of Sputnik by the Russians in October of 1957 and the expectations of young people that science by itself could answer all of mankind's problems. Then it was necessary to speak of the coincidence of a development in the public consciousness that "God is Dead". In other words, we had promoted knowledge and neglected belief resulting in confusion and despair for many of our people. It certainly was patriotic in those days to believe in science and I think that patriotism did strengthen the role of science in America, but that was only part of our job. "Learn More" was stressed, but I don't think "Care More", or "Believe More" were.

Naturally these divergent causes required some damage control and we are finally telling our youngsters that science can only go so far. The extra distance is both uplifting and liberating in that it marks true personal excellence, which call upon a value system, recognizes right from wrong, and even believes in absolutes. Examples are cited.

The examples got me into, health and education, but also vaccination, sexually transmitted disease, drug abuse, and the stress on the American family. Drug abuse and its origins and its management took up a large part of this lecture, because it was applicable to both health and education.

I closed with a hopeful note centered on evidence I was beginning to get from surveys, from parent action groups and from organizations such as The March of Dimes and the National Catholic Education Association. Most of these surveys do point us in a hopeful

direction and they summon us to continue working hard for progress in child health while strengthening our instincts to help our neighbors and to care deeply about all of America's children.

Alcohol and cigarettes as drugs
Alcohol and pregnancy
Binge drinking
Burden of chronic illness
Casual, uncaring sex
Drinking and driving
Drug Abuse
"Fetal alcohol syndrome"
Genital herpes
Health of the American Family
High School seniors and illicit drugs
History of drug use in young people
Hypocrisy of parents
Immunization of school-age children
Irreversible damage from alcohol
Marijuana
Parental guidance
Peer Pressure and alcohol
"Playing the percentages"
Psychotherapy
Science and "God Is Dead"
Sex education
Smoking in young people
Sputnik
Teaching parents to teach
The toll of fetal alcohol effects
The Trinity of mind, emotions, & spirit
Transition from childhood to adult life
Trivialization of love
Uniqueness of parental relationships

Congressman Michael Barnes (Maryland)
Terrel Bell (Secretary of Education)
Dr. Edward N. Brandt, Jr. (Asst. Secretary for
Health)
"Control Factor" (Minnesota)
Margaret M. Heckler
Journal of American Medical Association
Dr. William Mayer (Administrator of the Alcohol
Drug Abuse, and Mental Health
Administration)
National Institute of Drug Abuse
"Operation Snowball" (Illinois)

Pope John Paul II
“Project Graduation” (Maine)
Public Health Service
Nancy Reagan
Ronald Reagan
Richard Schweiker (Secretary of HHS)
“Students Against Drunk Driving” (SADD)
University of Michigan