

INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH ATTACKS BREAST CANCER

During the 1995-96 academic year, Karen Rothenberg, Marjorie Cook Professor of Law and Director of the School of Law's Law and Health Care Program, is serving as special assistant to the director of the Office of Research on Women's Health at the National Institutes of Health under an Interagency Professional Agreement. While at NIH, she will focus on legal and ethical issues such as women's inclusion in clinical trials and genetic testing issues.

Addressing the public policy, legal and ethical issues surrounding breast cancer is an important part of Professor Rothenberg's assignment. Not one of health care's success stories, breast cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in women aged 35 to 54. Despite greater use of early detection procedures, incidence rates are climbing, as are numbers of diagnosis and negligence suits. So, too, are the complex legal and ethical issues raised by breast cancer disease.

Outrage at the lack of progress in combatting the disease led to a 2.6 million strong petition drive in 1993, calling on President Clinton for a "plan to end the breast cancer epidemic." In response, the National Action Plan on Breast Cancer (NAPBC) evolved with input



Law and Health Care Program Director and Marjorie Cook Professor Karen Rothenberg will spend this academic year at the National Institutes of Health.

from a variety of lay and professional people, and addresses health care delivery, research, and policy issues.

The plan proposed actions in the areas of health care delivery, research and policy, including improving access to health services, expanding the scope and breadth of biomedical and behavioral research activities, and increasing the participation of advocacy groups in policy decision making. The plan also established a national task force to evaluate progress and identify new opportunities. Professor Rothenberg stated, "An interdisciplinary viewpoint is essential when considering changes in public policy."

To help focus that debate, Rothenberg organized a day-long symposium, "Breast

Cancer: Controversies and Challenges," held May 24, 1995, and attended by about 100 health care, legal and social service professionals. Featured speakers were Frances M. Visco, JD, President of the National Breast Cancer Coalition, and Dr. Vivian W. Pinn, who directs the Office of Research on Women's Health at NIH. In addition to Professor Rothenberg, faculty speakers from the University of Maryland at Baltimore were Drs. Trudy Bush, Kay Dickerson, Lauren Schnaper, and Ellen Silbergeld from the School of Medicine, Dr. Janice Phillips from the School of Nursing, and Dr. Julianne Oktay from the School of Social Work.

Professor Rothenberg has just completed an analysis of state legislative approaches to genetic information and health insurance for the NAPBC and National Center of Genome Research at NIH. Both the success of the breast cancer conference and Rothenberg's work at NIH emphasize the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to changing public policy. Rothenberg says, "It would be impossible to address legal and ethical concerns without continued input from physicians, nurses, epidemiologists, advocates and others. The complexity of these issues demands an interdisciplinary solution."

Judie Schwartz contributed to this article.



GOLDSTEIN HONORED AT '95 COMMENCEMENT

Maryland's legendary Comptroller Louis L. Goldstein '38 received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree at University of Maryland at Baltimore commencement ceremonies in May. Dean Donald Gifford presented Goldstein for the honor, citing his long years of service to Maryland and to the university.