Our Minds, Our Health

On March 22, Dr. Keith Norris, director of AXIS (Accelerating eXcellence In Translational Science) and Executive Vice President for Research and Health Affairs at CDU addressed an audience with his talk, “The Role of Thought in Health and Health Disparities”. Dr. Norris said that how people mentally handle stress changes influences their overall well-being. His discussion included the idea that health is more than the absence of illness, but a state of mind. Norris observed that the public health debate is often about bad or unhealthy behaviors. For example, the United States spends about $344 billion on healthcare costs for obesity. However, eating as a response to stress has been shown to have a positive mental effect, at least in the short term.

“We need to be thinking about how we, as health professionals, can impact thought,” Norris stated. He encouraged dialogue about the factors that condition thought—marginalization from society, institutionalized racism, low self worth, and loss of culture for example—many of which affect minority populations. Norris closed the talk by asking the audience to ask themselves, “What can you do that is critical and effective?” Dr. Norris will be following this forum with two others, one on April 26th and one on May 17th, both in Keck Auditorium. A video of Dr. Norris’ presentation can be found online at http://drew-axis.org/axis_doc/functions/AXIS/Norris_Role_of_Thought.wmv.

Dr. Norris’ editorial in Ethnicity & Disease entitled “Translational Research: Moving Scientific Advances into the Real-World Setting” may be interesting to those who attended this forum and can be found at http://drew-axis.org/axis_doc/functions/AXIS/Translational_research_editorial-crc.pdf.