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Carter Center's Donald Hopkins, Legendary Disease Eradication Expert, Receives Prestigious 2012 Pumphandle Award

Omaha, NE — Legendary eradication expert Dr. Donald R. Hopkins will receive the prestigious Pumphandle Award today from the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE), honoring his outstanding contributions to applied epidemiology.

“Donald Hopkins is renowned as an eradication expert, and his unwavering commitment to improving the lives of the world’s most disadvantaged people using a data-driven approach is unparalleled. This award recognizes his contributions to public health and epidemiology and the high esteem in which he is held by his colleagues,” CSTE President-elect Laurene Mascola, M.D., M.P.H. said. “We are pleased to award him CSTE’s highest honor.”

The Pumphandle Award will be given to Dr. Hopkins during the opening plenary of the CSTE Annual Conference. For more than four decades Dr. Hopkins has focused on eradicating smallpox and Guinea worm disease as well as battling a host of other diseases that impact the world’s most impoverished communities. Under his leadership, Guinea worm cases have been reduced by more than 99.9% worldwide from approximately 3.5 million cases in 1986 to less than 1,000 today.

The Pumphandle Award is the most prestigious award for applied epidemiology in the country. It commemorates the actions of Dr. John Snow, a 19th century physician and the “Father of Applied Epidemiology” who ended a cholera epidemic in London by removing the pump handle from a contaminated well. CSTE Executive Director Patrick McConnon said, “Dr. Hopkins' extraordinary leadership during the arduous campaign to eradicate Guinea worm disease makes him the ideal recipient of the 2012 Pumphandle Award.”

Dr. Hopkins is The Carter Center's Vice President for Health Programs and the chair of the International Task Force for Disease Eradication, housed at The Carter Center, helping identify potentially eradicable diseases. After heading the successful Smallpox Eradication/Measles Control Program in Sierra Leone early in his career, Dr. Hopkins was an assistant professor of tropical public health at the Harvard School of Public Health. From there he went on to serve as both Deputy Director (1984-1987) and Acting Director (1985) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention capping a distinguished career at the CDC.

CSTE is an organization of member states and territories and represents the perspective of epidemiologists working in state and local government. It is also a professional association of over 1,000 public health epidemiologists working in federal, state, local, and tribal health agencies, and U.S. territories. CSTE works to establish more effective working relationships among state and federal agencies and with other public health agencies. It also provides technical advice and assistance to partner organizations and to federal public health agencies such as CDC.

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