

Duncan Clark Awardee

Kurt W. Deuschle, MD

1990

Considered by many to be the "Father of Community Medicine," Kurt W. Deuschle served as Chairman of Mount Sinai's Community Medicine Department from 1968 until his retirement in 1990. Deuschle remained on faculty as a Distinguished Service Professor of Community Medicine until his death in 2003.



Deuschle was born in 1923, and his family emigrated from Germany to the United States the following year. They settled in Baden, Pennsylvania, where Deuschle spent his childhood. At the age of eighteen, Deuschle went to Kent State University, graduating cum laude in 1944. That same year he began medical school at the University of Michigan and graduated four years later.

From 1952-1954 he worked in the United States Public Health Service as Chief of the tuberculosis program at the Navajo Medical Center in Fort Defiance, Arizona. During this time he developed his concept of community health programs and was involved in the first field trials of the tuberculosis drug Isoniazid. Drawing from this experience he co-authored *The People's Health: Anthropology and Medicine in a Navajo Community* with medical anthropologist, John Adair. Published in 1970, the book was considered a major contribution to medical anthropology and Navajo health. Following his time in the U.S. Public Health Service, Deuschle went on to be the director of the Navajo-Cornell Field Health Research Project, where he worked with Walsh McDermott M.D. and John Adair.

In 1960 Deuschle created the first U.S. Department of Community Medicine at the University of Kentucky School of Medicine. Under Deuschle's leadership, the Department was committed to improving rural health. Known as the "Kentucky Model," the University of Kentucky's Community Medicine Department was much admired by likeminded medical professionals and inspired other universities to develop their own community medicine programs.

In 1968 Deuschle was named Chair of the Mount Sinai Department of Community Medicine. As the first full-time Chairman, Deuschle played a large role in shaping the research focus and mission of the department. Deuschle established a Division of International Medicine that worked with local physicians to create or improve health programs in several countries including Nigeria, China, Vietnam, Turkey, Columbia, Jamaica, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and the People's Republic of China.

Deuschle published over 100 journal articles during his career. Generally, these works centered on issues such as Navajo health, community medicine education, health manpower, health care delivery, and international health.