

VCU/Virginia Local Legends

Eleanor S. Cantrell, M.D.

"I never dreamed I'd get to learn the things my job has taught me. I'm really blessed to be involved in public health and to work with inspiring, passionate people who motivate me to be better."

Eleanor (Sue) Cantrell grew up in a small town in Tennessee dreaming of becoming a doctor from the age of five when a serious illness hospitalized her for days. "I wanted to be a doctor, but I had no idea how to go about it. In high school, a wonderful couple who were neighbors and pharmacists mentored me and convinced me that I could go to college and become a pharmacist. And that's how I started."

Going on to complete college, she worked two years as a pharmacist, then took—and passed—the entrance exam for medical school, graduating with honors and marking the start of a career in internal medicine and public health full of outreach and leadership which has brought great praise from the communities and people she serves in rural Virginia.

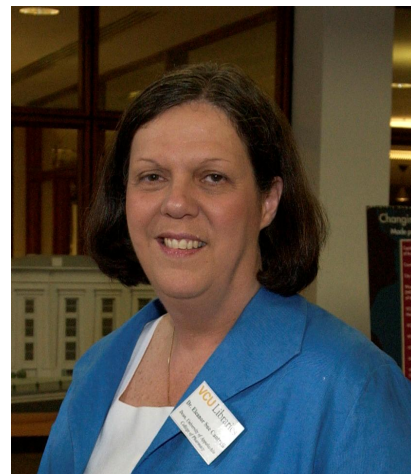
As the District Director of the Lenowisco Health District, a mountainous rural region of Appalachia, Cantrell has led a series of public health initiatives that have increased access to basic health care, and used telemedicine technologies to support diagnostic and screening programs to enhance the region's health care.

Cantrell began her career with a residency in Internal Medicine at Creighton University, in Omaha, followed by an appointment as staff physician in occupational health services at St. Joseph Hospital in Omaha. She came to the Lenowisco Health District as director in 1991 and has since built a reputation for serving the underserved and uninsured populations that are among the neediest in the state. "In a rural area like ours with coal mining, we have lots of chronic pulmonary illness and other problems like diabetes and hypertension. The biggest problem though is having access to good medicine for lots of people here. Telemedicine and mobile labs bring diagnostic services to underserved people who don't get the care they otherwise need," she said.

Nominated as a Local Legend by Rep. Rick Boucher (D-VA-9), Cantrell also has led the fight for improved air and water quality for Lenowisco, and for better emergency preparedness planning. She has been the primary medical contact and coordinator of the Remote Area Medical Clinic, providing dental and medical care to the uninsured and which, on one weekend in 2002, served more than 4000 patients.

Besides her work in telemedicine and mobile health labs, she developed the original software for a pharmacy access program that assists eligible patients in acquiring prescription medications at no or reduced cost, and she developed a model plan for small community wastewater disposal.

She often has been cited for the creativity and perseverance she brings to the challenges of public health. Wrote a colleague recently, "Not only are her heart and soul in her work, Sue brings ingenuity to the problems that confront rural and underserved populations."



Changing the Face of Medicine

VCU/ Virginia Local Legends

Marcella F. Fierro, M.D.

"I wanted to help sick people feel better."

In 1994, Dr. Marcella Fierro was appointed chief medical examiner for the Commonwealth of Virginia. She co-directs the Virginia Institute of Forensic Science and Medicine, offering week-long courses on topics such as advanced death investigation to medical examiners, crime scene investigators, judges, law enforcement investigators, prosecutors, forensic scientists, nurses, and others working in forensic science.



Dr. Fierro's skill and dedication inspired mystery writer Patricia Cornwell to write a series of crime novels in which the protagonist, Kay Scarpetta, was modeled after Dr. Fierro. Cornwell knew Dr. Fierro because she had worked as a computer analyst in Fierro's office of chief Medical Examiner. As a result of the widespread success of Cornwell's novels, the work of forensic pathologists has become familiar to the public in a way that would not have otherwise been possible.

Marcella Fierro, graduated *cum laude* in biology from D'Youville College in Buffalo, New York, and decided to become a physician in 1962. She earned her doctor of medicine in forensic pathology from the State University of New York at Buffalo School of Medicine in 1966. Following an internship and residency at Ottawa Civic Hospital in Ontario, Canada, Dr. Fierro pursued residencies in pathology at the Cleveland (Ohio) Clinic Educational Foundation and at Virginia Commonwealth University, where she became chief resident in Pathology, with a fellowship in forensic pathology in the Department of Legal Medicine at the Medical College of Virginia/Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond from 1973 to 1974. With board certification in Anatomic and Clinical Pathology, Dr. Fierro became chief medical examiner of Virginia, the state's highest position in forensic science, in 1994.

Dr. Fierro has been on the faculty of the Department of Legal Medicine and Pathology at Medical College of Virginia Campus of Virginia Commonwealth University since 1973, was clinical professor of pathology at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, from 1983 to 1992 and again in 1999 to 2002. She was staff pathologist at Richmond's Medical College of Virginia Hospitals from 1975 to 1992, then professor of Pathology at East Carolina School of Medicine in Greenville from 1992 to 1994. She is a member of the American Medical Association and the International Association for Identification, a Fellow of the American Society of Clinical Pathologists, the College of American Pathologists, and the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, among others, and is a past president of the National Association of Medical Examiners.

Dr. Fierro has been a consultant to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Task Force on National Crime Investigation Center, Unidentified Persons and Missing Persons Files, Washington D.C., since 1983, and has served on the board of editors and been a reviewer for *The American Journal of Forensic Medicine and Pathology* since 1979. She has made countless presentations and lectures before academic and professional organizations and has published extensively in peer-reviewed journals. Among her many awards is the Lifetime Achievement Award she received in 2001 from the School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences Medical Alumni Association, State University at Buffalo.

Dr. Fierro has appeared on the Discovery Channel's *New Detectives* series and on BBC regarding Cornwell's novel *From Potter's Field*. Dr. Fierro advised Cornwell on all her Scarpetta books, including *Postmortem*, *Body of Evidence*, *All that Remains*, *Cruel and Unusual*, *Body Farm*, and *From Potter's Field*.

Dr. Fierro has recently added mortality reviews to her forensic work, whereby she characterizes a death and develops a strategy for prevention. She was a legislative resource and testified on a bill amending homicide and malicious wounding statute to increase the penalty for the murder or malicious wounding of a pregnant woman. In providing this information, Dr. Fierro observes, "I am able to perform a public health function and criminal justice service. So I can serve both the living and the dead."

Changing the Face of Medicine VCU/ Virginia Local Legends

Lisa Kaplowitz, M.D.

"For me the most important reward is to know you made a difference in your community, that you contributed something and helped others."

Lisa Kaplowitz grew up in a family of doctors, both her father and grandfather were physicians, but she started out in college studying mathematics. "After two and a half years of high-level mathematics I had one of those soul-searching moments. How will this help me reach out and have an impact? If I stay with mathematics, how will I spend my life and make a difference." She switched majors and began studying to be a physician, a decision that led to a career full of outreach and leadership—first on the forefront in the battle against HIV/AIDS, and now as a leader in emergency preparedness in Virginia.



As the first Deputy Commissioner for Emergency Preparedness and Response in Virginia, Lisa Kaplowitz established a new statewide program that developed emergency response plans for bioterrorism and other public health emergencies.

"I'm proud of the work I did on HIV/AIDS for 20 years," she said. "Now I have a chance to build something new in emergency response and public health."

Lisa Kaplowitz began her career with a residency in Internal Medicine (1976) and a fellowship in Infectious Diseases (1978), both at the University of North Carolina. It was during her time in North Carolina that the first cases of AIDS were diagnosed. When she moved to Richmond, VA in the early 1980s, more AIDS patients began to show up. Trained in infectious diseases, Lisa Kaplowitz entered into the earliest battles against this new and baffling illness.

"At that time, nobody in Richmond was dealing with HIV/AIDS. When the first 10 patients with the illness are referred to you, you become the expert." It was the beginning of a 20 year commitment that led her to become a forceful advocate for AIDS policy and prevention.

Nominated by Senator John Warner (R-VA), Lisa Kaplowitz joined the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Health system in 1982, and in 1983 came to the Richmond Department of Public Health as Medical Director of the Sexually Transmitted Disease Clinic. She helped develop the first state-funded HIV/AIDS testing site and several HIV/AIDS clinics. As the first Director of the HIV/AIDS Center at VCU, she led in establishing new health care and public health programs and directed the program for 20 years.

She was a health policy fellow in the United States Senate in 1996-1997, and went on to receive her Masters in Health Administration in 2002. She received the Dean's Award for Community Service at VCU in 1992, was named Woman of the Year at VCU in 1995, and in 1999 received the Leadership Metro Richmond Community Vision Award. She was inducted into the Virginia Women's Hall of Fame in 1992.

Lisa Kaplowitz is widely published with numerous abstracts, papers, and commentaries, many related to HIV infection and prevention.

A colleague wrote of her recently, "She is a gentle, caring person who teaches by the example of her own dedication and commitment."

Changing the Face of Medicine VCU/ Virginia Local Legends

Yvonnecris Smith Veal, M.D.

“Since I first remembered anything I said, probably age 2 or 3, my answer to any question related to what I wanted to be when I grew up was ‘a doctor.’ That never wavered or changed. Since I didn’t really know any, nor seldom saw any doctors, I never really understood why as a child that was my dream—no, my reality. Later as a teenager, I realized how much I admired my grandmother because everyone seemed to ask for her when they were sick, hurt, or feeling bad. Only after she died did I learn that my grandmother was a certified licensed practical nurse. Maybe grandmother planted the word ‘doctor’ in my head.”



In 1895 the National Medical Association was founded to advocate for African American physicians and their patients. In 1989 Dr. Yvonnecris Smith Veal became the first woman to chair the association’s Board of Trustees. In 1995, while senior medical director for the U.S. Postal Service New York metropolitan area, Dr. Veal was named the 95th president of the National Medical Association. Only the fourth woman to serve as its president, Dr. Veal became a spokesperson for more than 25,000 African American physicians.

Yvonnecris Smith was born in Ahoskie, North Carolina, in 1936. She earned her bachelor’s degree at Hampton Institute (now Hampton University) in 1957, graduating *magna cum laude*. In the early 1960s, when Dr. Veal attended medical school, only about half of the universities in the southern United States accepted African American students. She was the fifth African American student enrolled at the Medical College of Virginia in Richmond. Dr. Veal recalls that, at her graduation in 1962, “the black student graduates were invited only to their own separate baccalaureate and graduation exercises. That let me know that ‘the struggle certainly was not over.’” Such discrimination convinced Dr. Veal to join the National Medical Association immediately following her medical training. Retaining hospital privileges at Kings County Hospital Center in Brooklyn, New York, where she completed her internship, residency, and fellowship in pediatrics, Dr. Veal developed a private practice and at the same time became active in the local National Medical Association chapter.

In the 1970s, Dr. Veal expanded her pediatric work into a general practice and later took on a number of administrative roles. In 1975 she was named director of medical affairs at the East New York Neighborhood Family Care Center. Later she served as medical director of the Carter Community Health Center. In 1984 Dr. Veal began work as a contract physician with the U.S. Postal Service. Finding her niche in occupational medicine, she was soon promoted to field division medical officer.

Dr. Veal is responsible for the occupational health and safety of over 80,000 U.S. Postal Service employees in the New York area. Named senior medical director in 1993, Dr. Veal has noticed that the scope of her work has changed dramatically over the past twenty years. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, whole new levels of security and safety have been added to her responsibilities. “The Postal Service is really a small cosmos of the larger world. Now all of our society has this extremely heightened sense of awareness and must take precautions.” In October 2001, two of Dr. Veal’s facilities were closed due to threats and exposure to anthrax. “Hour by hour we were reevaluating and making changes in what should be done medically. And still today, we are running respiratory studies and continuously testing and checking employees.” In a tribute to her leadership Dr. Veal received the U.S. Postal Service National Medical Directors Award in 1997 and 2002.

A member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority since 1955, Dr. Veal has remained an active member and was president of the Queens Alumnae Chapter from 1980 to 1984. She is also a member in the National Council of Negro Women, the American Medical Association, the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. In 1996 Dr. Veal received the Mary McLeod Bethune Award from the National Council of Negro Women.

Learn more about all the women who helped change the face of medicine online.
Information taken from “Changing the Face of Medicine” www.nlm.nih.gov/changingthefaceofmedicine/