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News

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Medical educator says his profession can't solve social and political problems.

DALLAS--A top medical educator declared today that medicine is increasingly being asked to satisfy social requirements which are none of its business.

Dr. Donald Seldin, noted kidney specialist and chairman of the Department of Internal Medicine at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical School here, attacked the World Health Organization's definition of health as "coercive."

Referring to the WHO statement that health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, Dr. Seldin said:

"These definitions make the physician responsible for 'happiness' and 'the good life'....but these are not medical problems and will not be altered by biomedical machinery."

Dr. Seldin spoke at a medical reunion and commemoration organized to celebrate his 25th year as chairman of the Department of Internal Medicine. The three-day session features a number of scientific papers concerning latest advances in a number of fields of internal medicine.

Dr. Seldin said that of the three solutions proposed for current health problems, national health insurance was a noble concept but subject to disastrous consequences in delivery; that more medical schools are becoming increasingly costly at \$125 million for a new institution and \$50,000 per student year; and that grinding out more medical students wouldn't solve the problems of maldistribution.

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As a member of numerous national health committees and one who has been widely published in the field of kidney disease and fluid balance, Dr. Seldin previously has cautioned that medical schools and medicine in general should limit roles to goals of relieving pain, preventing disability and postponing death.

"Within the past decade the exalted role of the physician has progressively deteriorated and practically decayed....as politicians systematically attacked medical institutions--challenging the very roots of the system," Dr. Seldin said.

A series of banquets were scheduled in conjunction with the scientific sessions. The program, "Current Topics in Internal Medicine," was sponsored by Southwestern Medical School, the Department of Internal Medicine and the Renal Trust.

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