Health Policy Newsletter

Volume 17 Number 3 **September, 2004** **Article 5**

The Inactive Reserve Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service

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Suggested Citation:
Koppel M. The inactive reserve corps of the U.S. Public Health Service. Health Policy Newsletter 2004; 17(3): Article 5. Retrieved [date] from http://jdc.jefferson.edu/hpn/vol17/iss3/5.

The Inactive Reserve Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service

The United States Department of Health and Human Services is seeking officer candidates for the Inactive Reserve Corps (IRC). The IRC is a component of the Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service (PHS), one of the nation's seven uniformed services. Administered by the Office of the Surgeon General, the IRC is composed primarily of direct practice health professionals who can provide surge capacity for staffing shortages in the field and deployment during emergencies or disasters. These professionals include physicians, dentists, nurses, engineers, scientists, veterinarians, pharmacists, therapists, dieticians, environmental health officers, and health service officers (physician assistants, psychologists, medical record librarians, and optometrists).

To be accepted in the IRC, applicants must be U.S. citizens, under age 45, in good health, and, if applicable, licensed in one or more states, districts, or territories. IRC Commissioned Officers may be asked to serve short or intermittent tours of active duty with agencies, operative divisions, or programs of the Department of Health and Human Services, as well as in medically underserved areas of the nation. Commissioned positions are salaried and pay scales are comparable to those for military officers. Officers called to active duty with the PHS for the first time are also entitled to a one-time uniform allowance.

As a member of the PHS Commissioned Corps for the last 46 years, I have served more than 20 short tours (two to three weeks), two intermittent tours (up to 100 days in a year), and two years of active duty. My assignments have been both challenging and rewarding, taking me to many beautiful locations in the U.S. and its possessions. I take great pride in my almost half century of service to our country. And, it wasn't necessary to give up my "day job" – 35 years in the private practice of urology in Philadelphia.

The Jefferson community will benefit by encouraging its health care students, residents, and staff to serve as IRC Commissioned Officers. This is a unique opportunity not only to enhance professional skills, knowledge and abilities, but also to gain broader experience and perspective in population-based health services.

For more information on joining the Inactive Reserves, visit the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps web site at www.usphs.gov, or contact Dr. Max Koppel at 301-443-1560 or mkoppel@osophs.dhhs.gov.

About the Author

Max Koppel, MD, MBA, MPH, is a Clinical Assistant Professor of Urology in the Department of Urology, and engages in special projects for the Department of Health Policy at Jefferson Medical College, Thomas Jefferson University.