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Health Coverage Fellowship Chooses Class for 2010

BOSTON – Eleven medical journalists from across the nation today are being named to the 2010 class of the Health Coverage Fellowship.

The fellowship, the first of its kind in the country, is designed to help the media do a better job covering critical health care issues. It does that by bringing in as speakers more than 50 top health officials, policy people, and researchers. It also brings the fellows out to watch first-hand how the system works, from walking the streets at night with mental health case workers to riding a Medflight helicopter.

The program, now entering its ninth year, is sponsored by the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation, with help from the Maine Health Access Foundation, New Hampshire's Endowment for Health, Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky, and Texas-based Hogg Foundation for Mental Health.

The fellowship will run for nine days, beginning April 30. It is housed at Babson College's Center for Executive Education in Wellesley, and is operated in collaboration with leading journalism organizations. Larry Tye, who covered health and environmental issues at the *Boston Globe* for 15 years, directs the program. A former Nieman Fellow and the author of five books, Tye has taught journalism at Boston University, Northeastern, Tufts, and Harvard.

The 2010 class includes Cathy Corman of WGBH Radio in Boston, Shawn Cunningham of WAGM TV in Maine, Jennifer Huberdeau of the *North Adams (MA) Transcript*, Tara Kaprowy of the *Sentinel-Echo* in Kentucky and Community Newspaper Holdings, Cynthia McCormick of the *Cape Cod Times*, Karen Nugent of the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette*, Denis Paiste of the *New Hampshire Union Leader*, Jason Roberson of the *Dallas Morning News*, Kathryn Tolbert of the *Washington Post*, Laura Ungar of the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, and Robert Weisman of the *Boston Globe*.

The fellowship will focus on a series of pressing health issues, from insuring the uninsured to mental illness, ethnic and economic disparities in the delivery of care, and the latest innovations in medical treatment. Attention also will be given to public health scares, from understanding the deadly powers of illnesses like swine and avian flu to knowing the capabilities – and limits – of public health authorities who respond to terrorism and disease outbreaks.

And the teaching does not end when fellows head back to their stations or papers. Tye, the program director, is on call for the journalists for the full year following their nine days in Wellesley. He will help when they are stuck for ideas, or for whom to call on a story. He will assist in thinking out projects and carving out clearer definitions of beats. He also maintains a web site where fellows post their stories.