

“When Germs Travel: Coronavirus, Quarantines, and Contagious Crises”

Remarks prior to presentation by Howard Markel, M.D., Ph.D.,

February 17, 2020

Thank you to the sponsors of today’s talk: Oakland University’s Provost, Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine, Oakland University School of Nursing, Oakland University School of Health Sciences, the Department of History, the Center for Civic Engagement and the Department of Political Science.

We are so fortunate to have with us Dr. Howard Markel, one of the most renowned global experts in public health and epidemics, and truly a preeminent interdisciplinary intellectual whose compelling insights inspire us to understand the interconnections among medicine, public health and cultural history.

Currently, Dr. Markel is the George E. Wantz, M.D. Distinguished Professor of the History of Medicine and Director of the Center for the History of Medicine at the University of Michigan.

Dr. Markel’s perspective is especially timely as the world struggles to contain the coronavirus, and understand how to prepare for the potential spread of the dangerous illness, which has killed more than 1,000 people and infected 43,000 worldwide.

He has been interviewed extensively by the international broadcast and print news media, and has written op-eds in the Washington Post and The New York Times on the Chinese quarantine and containment strategies in Wuhan.

In today’s lecture, “When Germs Travel: Coronavirus, Quarantines and Contagious Crises,” Dr. Markel will share his insights about contagious diseases and how epidemics can spread because of concealment efforts, the misuse of public health

tools, and how viruses spread through travel.

In reviewing Dr. Markel's biography, I found myself drawn deeper and deeper into the impressive list of his accomplishments and honors. (It's no easy task to be brief when introducing such an accomplished scholar and expert.)

Dr. Markel's many accomplishments include:

- A member of the National Academy of Medicine
- A Guggenheim Fellowship for demonstrating "exceptional capacity for productive scholarship or exceptional creative ability in the arts."
- Induction into the Johns Hopkins University Society of Scholars.
- Recipient of the Rockefeller Foundation prestigious academic writing residency at its Bellagio Center in Italy, which has included Nobel laureates, Pulitzer Prize winners, leading academics, artists, and thought leaders.
- Recipient of the University of Michigan Regents' Distinguished Public Service Award for his "contributions to the history of medicine and service to Michigan, the nation, and the world."
- And, last year, the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine presented Dr. Markel with its Distinguished Medical Alumnus Award.

His incomparable grasp of epidemic preparedness is among the reasons he has served as a consultant for the United States Department of Defense, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and as a member the CDC's "Novel A/H1N1 Influenza

Team B,” a think tank that evaluated the federal government’s influenza policies during and after the outbreak.

An acclaimed social and cultural historian of medicine, public health, and epidemics, Dr. Markel is the author, co-author, or co-editor of eleven books including the award-winning “When Germs Travel: Six Major Epidemics That Have Invaded America Since 1900 and the Fears They Have Unleashed.”

Dr. Markel has contributed over 500 articles, reviews, essays and book chapters to a wide range of scholarly publications and popular periodicals, including The New England Journal of Medicine, American Journal of Public Health, and The Journal of the American Medical Association.

Currently, Dr. Markel is at work on a history of the structure of DNA, including documenting the lives of James Watson, Francis Crick, Maurice Wilkins, Linus Pauling, and Rosalind Franklin.

Clearly, the breadth of Dr. Markel’s expertise and the range of his accomplishments reflect the resonance of his wisdom and power of his scholarly brilliance.

Please join with me in giving Dr. Markel a warm and generous Oakland University welcome.