



Named by *Time* magazine as one of the "Nation's 50 Future Leaders Age 40 and Under," Regina M. Benjamin, MD, MBA, is Founder and CEO of the BayouClinic in Bayou La Batre, Alabama.

Following graduation from Xavier University, Morehouse School of Medicine, and the University of Alabama School of Medicine, Dr. Benjamin chose to return to the region in which she grew up, opening a family practice in Bayou la Batre, a small shrimping village along the Gulf Coast. In an area where need, not money, is prevalent, most of Dr. Benjamin's patients hold low-paying jobs that do not provide them with any health insurance.

Since 1990, Benjamin has been the sole family physician in this impoverished Gulf Coast town of 2,500 residents. She kept her clinic financially afloat by moonlighting in emergency rooms and nursing homes. When Hurricane Georges wrecked the building in 1998, she spent the next two years treating patients out of her Ford pickup. After earning her MBA from Tulane University, Dr. Benjamin converted her office to a rural health clinic dedicated to serving the community.

Dr. Benjamin's extraordinary dedication and self-sacrifice have earned her consistent national media attention. Featured in a New York Times article labeling her as an "Angel in a White Coat," she was named "Person of the Week" on ABC's "World News Tonight with Peter Jennings" and "Woman of the Year" by "CBS This Morning." She was featured on the December 1999 cover of *Clarity* magazine, appeared on the January 2003 cover of *Reader's Digest*, and has been featured in numerous other publications, including *Redbook*, *Southern Living*, *People*, *Coastal Living*, and *Good Housekeeping*. Despite the nationwide media recognition for her efforts, Dr. Benjamin insists that the greater reward is achieved "in the individual patient, one at a time."

Dr. Benjamin is former Associate Dean for Rural Health at the University of South Alabama College of Medicine in Mobile where she administered the Alabama-AHEC program and USA Telemedicine Program. In 1998 she was the United States recipient of the Nelson Mandela Award for Health and Human Rights. In 1995, she was elected to the American Medical Association Board of Trustees, making her the first physician under age 40 and the first African-American woman to be elected. She also served as President of the American Medical Association Education and Research Foundation (AMA-ERF) and is a current member of the AMA Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs.

In 2002 she became President of the Medical Association State of Alabama, making her the first African American female president of a State Medical Society in the United States. Dr. Benjamin is also co-author of the book *How's Your Health? What You Can Do To Make Your Health and Health Care Better*.

A member of the National Academy of Science's Institute of Medicine, Dr. Benjamin is also a diplomate of the American Board of Family Practice and a Fellow of the American Academy of Family Physicians. She was a Kellogg National Fellow and a Rockefeller Next Generation Leader. Some of her numerous board memberships have included the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and

the Uninsured, Catholic Health East, Federation of State Medical Boards, Alabama Board of Medical Examiners, Alabama State Committee of Public Health, Alabama Rural Health Association, Leadership Alabama, Mobile Area Red Cross, Mercy Medical, Mobile Chamber of Commerce, United Way of Mobile, and Former Vice President Deep South Girl Scout Council. She is also a Trustee of Birmingham Southern University and Florida A&M University.

She was appointed by the Department of Health and Human Services Secretary to the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Act Committee (CLIAC), the Council of Graduate Medical Education (COGME), and the NIH National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities. She is former chair of the USMLE Step 3 Committee and member of the National Board of Medical Examiners. In Alabama, Dr. Benjamin served as Vice President of the Governor's Commission on Aging, and was a member of the Governor's Health Care Reform Task Force and the Governor's Task Force on Children's Health. She has also spent time doing missionary work in Honduras and is a former Board Member of Physicians for Human Rights.

Dr. Benjamin is also one of the most inspirational speakers available to today's healthcare community. Consistently guided by a strong sense of social conscience, she stresses the importance individual leadership, particularly when dealing with such societal issues as racial and ethnic health disparities in our healthcare system and the challenges faced when treating the working poor. A strong proponent of community involvement, she emphasizes the importance of continually working to improve the quality of healthcare service. She's also an inspiring example of the intangible benefits available to anyone who is committed to making a difference.

Within the United States, Dr. Benjamin says solving our country's healthcare woes will require societal change: an overhaul of policies, broader insurance systems, and better distribution of physicians nationwide. Her prescription for the small shrimping village of Bayou La Batre, Alabama, is simple: Give treatment to all patients, whether they can pay or not.

#### Reference

Speakers Platform, <http://www.speaking.com/speakers/reginabenjamin.html>