

## ACG President's Special Recognition Award

The ACG President's Special Recognition Award is presented periodically to recognize outstanding contributions that have advanced public health, the practice of medicine, clinical science, patient care or the College. Recipients are chosen by the President and subject to the approval of the ACG Board of Trustees.

### 2014 Recipient

#### Howard K. Koh, MD, MPH



Howard K. Koh, MD, MPH, is Professor of the Practice of Public Health Leadership and Director of the Leading Change Studio at the Harvard School of Public Health.

From 2009-2014, Dr. Koh served as the 14<sup>th</sup> Assistant Secretary for Health for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), after being nominated by President Barack Obama and confirmed by the U.S. Senate. During that time he oversaw 12 core public health offices, including the Office of the Surgeon General and the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, 10 Regional Health Offices across the nation, and 10 Presidential and Secretarial advisory committees. He also served as senior public health advisor to the Secretary. During his tenure, he championed the critical public health dimensions of the Affordable Care Act, promoted the enrollment of underserved populations into health insurance coverage and was the primary architect of landmark HHS Strategic Plans for tobacco control, health disparities and chronic hepatitis. He also led interdisciplinary implementation of Healthy People 2020 and the National HIV/AIDS Strategy as well as initiatives in a multitude of other areas, such as nutrition and physical activity (including HHS activities for the First Lady's Let's Move! Initiative), cancer control, adult immunization, environmental health and climate change, women's health, adolescent health, Asian American and Pacific Islander health, behavioral health, health literacy, multiple chronic conditions, organ donation and epilepsy.

Dr. Koh previously served at Harvard School of Public Health (2003-2009) as the Harvey V. Fineberg Professor of the Practice of Public Health, Associate Dean for Public Health Practice and Director of the Harvard School of Public Health Center for Public Health Preparedness. He has published more than 250 articles in the medical and public health literature in areas such as health reform, disease prevention and health promotion, health disparities, tobacco control, cancer control, melanoma and skin oncology, public health preparedness, health literacy and public health leadership.

Dr. Koh was Commissioner of Public Health for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (1997-2003) after being appointed by Governor William Weld. As Commissioner, Dr. Koh led the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, which included a wide range of health services, four hospitals, and a staff of more than 3,000 professionals. In this capacity, he emphasized the power of prevention and strengthened the state's commitment to eliminating health disparities. During his service, the state saw advances in areas such as tobacco control, cancer screening, bioterrorism response after 9/11 and anthrax, health issues of the homeless, newborn screening, organ donation, suicide prevention and international public health partnerships.

Dr. Koh graduated from Yale College, where he was President of the Yale Glee Club, and the Yale University School of Medicine. He completed postgraduate training at Boston City Hospital and Massachusetts General Hospital, serving as chief resident in both hospitals. He has earned board certification in four medical fields: internal medicine, hematology, medical oncology, and dermatology, as well as a Master of Public Health degree from Boston University. At Boston University Schools of Medicine and Public Health, he was Professor of Dermatology, Medicine and Public Health as well as Director of Cancer Prevention and Control.

He has earned over 70 awards and honors for interdisciplinary accomplishments in medicine and public health, including the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Legacy Award for National Service, the Distinguished Service Award from the American Cancer Society and four honorary degrees. President Bill Clinton appointed Dr. Koh as a member of the National Cancer Advisory Board (2000-2002). He is an elected member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies. A past Chair of the Massachusetts Coalition for a Healthy Future (the group that pushed for the Commonwealth's groundbreaking tobacco control initiative), Dr. Koh was named by the New England Division of the American Cancer Society as "one of the most influential persons in the fight against tobacco during the last 25 years." He has also received the 2012 Champion Award from the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, the "Hero of Epilepsy" Award from the Epilepsy Foundation, and the Baruch S. Blumberg Prize from the Hepatitis B Foundation. He was named to the K100 (the 100 leading Korean Americans in the first century of Korean immigration to the United States), and has received the Boston University Distinguished Alumnus Award. He enjoys the distinction of throwing out the ceremonial first pitch on two different occasions: at Nationals Park in Washington DC on behalf of HHS (2011), and at Fenway Park where he was designated a "Medical All Star" by the Boston Red Sox (2003) in recognition of his national contributions to the field of early detection and prevention of melanoma.

Dr. Koh and his wife, Dr. Claudia Arrigg, are the proud parents of three adult children.