



For Immediate Release  
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## **Vermont Medical Society Honors 2020 Leadership Award Winners**

*VMS Honors those who have demonstrated Outstanding Service  
to Health Care and Community*

**Montpelier, Vt.** (November 20, 2020) – During its 207<sup>th</sup> virtual VMS Annual Meeting earlier this month, the Vermont Medical Society (VMS) has recognized five individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the health and well-being of Vermonters and the nation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Mark Levine, M.D.**, of Essex Jct., VT and Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Health, has been selected as the Vermont Medical Society’s Distinguished Service Award winner for 2020. The Distinguished Service Award is the highest award VMS can bestow upon one of its members and is given on the basis of meritorious service in the science and art of medicine and for outstanding contributions to the medical profession, its organizations, and the welfare of the public

VMS Council-member, Dick Butsch, M.D., said about Dr. Levine, “In a few short months he has undoubtedly saved so many lives and preserved the health of so many people...Most importantly he has established Vermont as the single healthiest state in our country in terms of the SARS-CoV2 Pandemic.”

Dr. Levine was nominated for his tireless work mitigating the impact of the COVID pandemic on Vermonters and his effectiveness at keeping the number of coronavirus cases and deaths in the State at some of the lowest in the country. During the pandemic, he has not only spent countless hours obtaining the latest, evidence-based information regarding COVID, but has also consistently and

calmly communicated this information and sound public health guidance to clinicians and all Vermonters. His cogent presentations to both the leaders and the citizens of the state has seen to it that Vermont has been guided through this unprecedented medical event by adhering to the best guidelines that science and clinical expertise can provide.

VMS President Catherine Schneider, M.D., said in presenting the award, “Dr. Levine, you have presented yourself, and hence our profession, to the citizens of Vermont as knowledgeable, competent and compassionate. By exercising the best tenets of our profession in this time of crisis, you have elevated us all. For these reasons you have been chosen to receive this award.”

Dr. Levine was named the Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Health in March of 2017. Prior to his appointment, Dr. Levine was a professor of medicine at the University of Vermont, associate dean for graduate medical education, and designated institutional official at the College of Medicine and UVM Medical Center. He received his B.A. in biology from the University of Connecticut and M.D. from the University of Rochester. He completed his internal medicine residency and chief resident year at the University of Vermont, and a fellowship in general internal medicine at the University of North Carolina.

**Jessie Leyse, M.D.**, practicing in Berlin, VT, has been selected to receive the Vermont Medical Society's Physician of the Year Award for 2020. Dr. Leyse, an infectious disease specialist at the Central Vermont Medical Center (CVMC), reportedly works day and night during the pandemic and continues to endeavor to provide patients and staff alike with answers to questions, adjusting PPE, treatment, testing and staff furlough algorithms weekly. Dr. Leyse's dedication and commitment has helped establish CVMC as a leader among hospitals across the state with her innovative pandemic protocols. This leadership has enabled CVMC's ability to respond to the pandemic and the overall health of the broader community. Dr. Leyse's nominator calls her a “one-woman-infectious-

disease guru” and describes her as not only a great physician, but a tireless mom with a calm, kind yet quick-witted disposition.

Dr. Leyse attended Loyola University Chicago for college and medical school. She did a combined residency in Internal Medicine and Pediatrics at Baystate Medical Center in Massachusetts and attended Dartmouth Hitchcock for an Infectious Disease fellowship. While there, she obtained her Master’s in Public Health as well as doing a residency in Preventive Medicine. Dr. Leyse has traveled internationally to provide medical care including to the Philippines, Guatemala, Haiti, Sub-Saharan Africa, and West Africa during the Ebola outbreak.

The Physician of the Year Award is granted annually to a physician licensed in the state of Vermont who has demonstrated outstanding performance in the quality of care given to his/her patients; skillful and compassionate patient care; and dedication to the welfare of his patients in accordance with accepted principles of good medical practice.

**Jean Anderrson-Swayze, M.D.**, of Middlebury, VT, has been selected to receive the Physician Award for Community Services for 2020. Dr. Anderrson-Swayze, a family medicine physician, was nominated for this year’s award for her dedication to international public health and her consistent bravery in helping people who are experiencing times of struggle. She has brought her expertise around the world and volunteered during countless emergency health crises. This April, Dr. Anderrson-Swayze spent a week in New York City, volunteering as a member of the International Medical Corps Disaster Response Team to a COVID-19 surge at Maimonides Hospital in NY, NY. When she returned to Vermont her experience led to early and effective COVID-19 testing in the Middlebury community, keeping patients out of the emergency rooms. She has volunteered to provide medical assistance after health crises in Haiti, Houston, Puerto Rico, Florida and Bahamas. She has also travelled to Greece and Bangladesh to work

with refugees and volunteers with Meals on Wheels and at the Open-Door Clinic while at home in Vermont.

Dr. Andersson-Swayze practices at the Middlebury Family Health Clinic in Middlebury, Vermont and attended Middlebury College before completing her medical training at the UVM College of Medicine and her residency at Fletcher Allen.

The Physician Award for Community Services is granted annually to a physician who has compiled an outstanding record of community service.

The Citizen of the Year Award recipient for 2020 is **Senator Virginia “Ginny” Lyons** of Williston, VT. Senator Lyons, the current Chair of the Vermont Senate Health and Welfare Committee, has served in the State’s legislature for twenty years. Her nomination identifies Senator Lyons as a steadfast advocate for public health issues and a true champion for Vermonters’ health. While in the Senate Health and Welfare Committee, Senator Lyons has been at the forefront of public health policy and worked tirelessly to pass legislation to raise the age for tobacco purchases to 21, to ban tobacco flavors, to protect our youngest population by banning crib bumpers and to support reproductive rights. Senator Lyons believes in science, in evidence, and in the experts, and is a true collaborator who works in partnership to make sure that science and evidence is heard from those who dedicate their lives to the practice of medicine.

Virginia Lyons of Williston, VT, a Chittenden County Democrat, was born in Auburn, NY. She was educated at Drew University, Rutgers University, and earned her Doctorate at the University of Vermont. She taught at Trinity College, VT, for 27 years.

The Citizen of the Year Award is given to a non-physician resident of the state of Vermont who in the past and presently has made a significant contribution to the health of the people of Vermont.

**Anthony Fauci, M.D.**, has been selected to receive the VMS Founder's Award for 2020, for his stalwart leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Founders' Award is presented to individuals who have demonstrated outstanding leadership, vision, and achievement in improving the health of Vermonters and all Americans.

Dr. Fauci's nomination states, "in this time when so many seem to be turning away from the science and the evidence, you have been a steadfast pillar, constantly bringing us back to these tools that we know are the only way we will be able to help our patients – improving the health of Vermonters and all Americans." Dr. Fauci's commitment to following the data and the science while on the front lines of battling this pandemic can serve as a North Star during these turbulent times.

Dr. Fauci is an immunologist who has served as the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases since 1984. He attended the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts. After graduating first in his class from New York City's Cornell Medical College in 1966, he completed his internship and residency at New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center.

The VMS Physician Leadership Awards for 2020 were presented during an awards ceremony on Saturday, November 7, 2020, as a part of the Vermont Medical Society's 207th Virtual Annual Meeting for VMS members and Vermont's healthcare community.

**About the Vermont Medical Society:** The Vermont Medical Society is the leading voice of physicians in the state and is dedicated to protecting the health of all Vermonters and improving the environment in which Vermont physicians and physician assistants practice medicine. The Society serves its 2,400 members through public policy advocacy on the state and federal levels, as well as by providing legal, administrative and educational support, producing a rich flow of news and information and offering member benefits that increase medical practice effectiveness and efficiency. For more information, visit [www.VTMD.org](http://www.VTMD.org).