

Out in the rural: a Mississippi health center and its war on poverty

Ward, Thomas J., author

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Abstrak

In 1965, as part of the War on Poverty, the Office of Economic Opportunity approved a \$1.3 million grant to fund the development of the first two community health centers in the United States: The Tufts-Delta Health Center in Mound Bayou, Mississippi, and the Columbia Point Health Center in Boston, which pioneered a health care delivery system that now includes more than 1,200 community centers in every U.S. state, providing care to over 24 million Americans annually. The architect of these centers was Dr. H. Jack Geiger, now known as the father of community medicine, who, along with members of the Medical Committee on Human Rights, a group of physicians active in the civil rights movement, conceived of this program in 1964. Drawing on his experience in South Africa, where he had apprenticed under Dr. Sidney Kark, who had developed community-based health centers in African townships, Geiger proposed a similar program for the poor in the United States. An advocate of the social determinants of health, Geiger created a center in Mississippi that did more than just provide clinical services; it developed innovative programs in nutrition, education, and environmental services. Out in the Rural also deals with the opposition that the center faced, from both state officials and local residents, providing insights into both race and class relations in Mississippi during the final years of the civil rights era. Finally, by examining the legacy of the Tufts-Delta Health Center, Out in the Rural provides a reevaluation of the War on Poverty a half-century after its inception.