

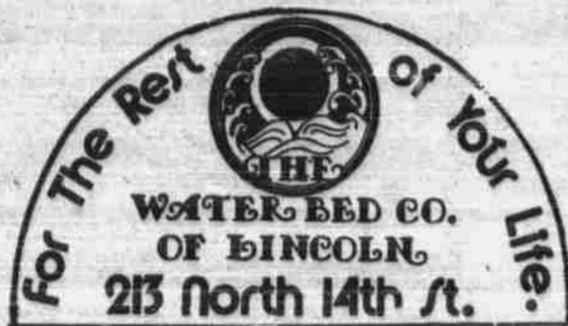
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Task force begins studying state's rural health problems

By Rex Henderson
A University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) task force will begin this week to study Nebraska's rural health problem.

Appointed this summer by UNMC Chancellor Neal Vanselow, the task force will develop ways UNMC can improve health care delivery and education in rural Nebraska.

"There is a problem with health care in rural Nebraska," Vanselow said, as there is in most rural states.

Vanselow said the main rural health problems are a lack of physicians in rural areas and lack of access by rural health professionals to educational resources.

"The Medical Center has done a lot to improve it (rural health care)," Vanselow said, "but I think we can do more."

Problems, solutions complex

The problems and solutions to rural health are very complicated," he said.

Doctors in rural areas often are on call 24 hours a day, every day, he said. After several years they are ready to find a specialty and move to a city for an eight-hour working day.

Other reasons for the scarcity of rural doctors include lack of professional stimulation from colleagues, according to Vanselow.

low. Marital problems caused by rigorous work days also are common, he said.

Vanselow suggested some of the solutions might include:

-More lenient admission standards for medical students from rural areas. Doctors who grow up in rural areas are more likely to practice there, Vanselow said.

-More exposure to rural practice through student apprenticeships with rural doctors.

-More family practice residencies in rural areas.

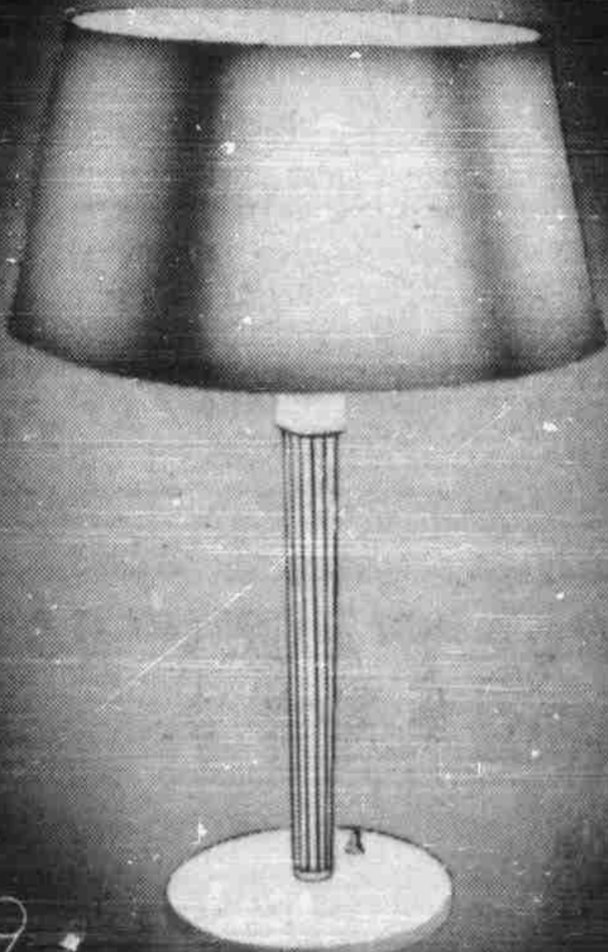
Complete by January

Dr. Paul Young, task force chairman, said he expects to submit a report to Vanselow by January 1.

Young said the task force will cooperate with the Governor's Commission on Rural Health and Nebraska Medical Association studies.

Other committee members include Dr. L. Kirk Benedict, College of Pharmacy; Jane Carney, College of Nursing; Richard Evers, UNMC Hospital; Dr. Harry McFadden, microbiology; Dr. Perry Rieby, College of Medicine; Dr. Glenn Rosenquist, pediatrics; Dr. Leo Lucas, dean of the cooperative extension at UNL; Dr. Richard Tollefson of the Nebraska Medical Association on rural health; and Brian Nyquist, a second-year medical student.

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