



Antonia Coello Novello, MD. MPH. Dr.PH

Dr. Antonia Coello Novello, 14th Surgeon General of the United States, was born in Fajardo, Puerto Rico. She graduated from the University of Puerto Rico with a B.S. degree in 1965 and an M.D. degree in 1970. She completed her subspecialty training in pediatric nephrology at the University of Michigan and Georgetown University. Dr. Novello received a masters in Public Health from the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health in 1982, and a Doctor of Public Health in May 2000. She holds countless awards, including the Legion of Merit, The James Smithson Bicentennial Medal, and the National Governor's Association Distinguished Service to State Government Award, as well as a membership in the Alpha Omega Alpha Medical Society and Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences, to name a few, and over 56 *honoris causa*. In 2011, Dr. Novello received the Don Quijote Lifetime Achievement Award.



On March 9, 1990, Dr. Antonia Novello was sworn in by Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor to serve as the 14th Surgeon General of the U.S. Public Health Service. Her appointment marked two firsts: Dr. Novello became the first woman and the first Hispanic ever to hold this position. As Surgeon General, Dr. Novello advised the public on health matters such as smoking, AIDS, diet and nutrition, environmental health hazards, and the importance of immunization and disease prevention.

On June 3, 1999, Governor George E. Pataki nominated Dr. Novello to be the 13th New York State Health Commissioner; one of the leading health agencies in the nation with a \$49 Billion budget – one-third of the whole NY state budget. Most recently, Dr. Novello served as the Executive Director of Public Health Policy at Florida Hospital. She served as a liaison between the government of the Dominican Republic and its Attorney General on raising the awareness of domestic violence and spearheading efforts for national legislation, invited by the US ambassador to the Dominican Republic.

During the recovery effort after Hurricane María, Dr. Novello was involved in setting up community health clinics in the center of the island, where she distributed medications, resources, and cots to multiple sectors with the help of the National Guard medical force and the US Army. She was also instrumental in the establishment of mental health clinics with the assistance of medical students of UCC and the National Guard. She has also become a consultant for the National Guard in the aftermath of the earthquake on the island. At that time, she was in charge of supervising the health of people affected by the earthquakes, especially the mental health aspect of the people living in the tent cities of the five towns massively affected by the earthquakes.

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, she has become the spokesperson and public health advocate for the prevention efforts regarding the virus. Currently, she is involved with VOCES and the National Guard of Puerto Rico in testing for COVID-19 and vaccinating the elderly for influenza in Puerto Rico. Today she continues her work developing and strengthening ties of trust as a mentor and creative agent of new initiatives in different sectors, arising from the current need for access to health, disease prevention with vaccination, and education for the masses. At this moment, Dr. Antonia Novello has become a health advocate for the new realities of public health in Puerto Rico.