

Randall Maxey



Personal Information

Born on December 1, 1941, in Cincinnati, OH; married Gem L. Maxey, 1979; five children

Education: University of Cincinnati, BS, pharmacy, 1966; Howard University, MD, 1972; Howard University, PhD, cardiovascular pharmacology, 1972.

Memberships:

Selected: Association of Minority Nephrologists, founder and board member, 1986-; Church Health Network, founder and president, 1990-; Unity One, Anti-Gang Advocacy Program, board member, 1998-; National Medical Association, president, 2003-; Congressional Black Caucus, Health Policy Advisory Commission, member, 2004-.

Career

University Hospital, Downstate Medical Center, Brooklyn, NY, director ambulatory dialysis, 1976-78; Charles R. Drew University, Department of Medicine and Science, Los Angeles, CA, clinical assistant professor, 1980-88; Daniel Freeman Memorial Hospital, Inglewood, CA, director of nephrology, 1983-88; Robert F. Kennedy Medical Center, Hawthorne, CA, director of nephrology, 1983-96; DaVita Pacific Coast Dialysis Center, Inglewood, CA, medical director, 1986-; Diversified Health Care, Inglewood, CA, executive vice president, 1992-; Los Angeles Dialysis Center, Los Angeles, CA, supervising medical director, 1993-98; Pacific Dialysis Center, Dededo, Guam, supervising medical director, 1993-98; Guam Renal Care, Hemodialysis Center, Agana, Guam, supervising medical director, 1996-98. Served as attending physician at many hospitals over the course of his career.

Life's Work

In 1972, with the roar of the civil rights movement still ringing loud, Dr. Randall Maxey began practicing medicine. As he launched a lifelong career in kidney disease prevention and treatment, he also fought for the rights of minority patients and doctors. Years of research and activism in minority healthcare eventually led to his being elected president of the National Medical Association (NMA), the country's largest association of African-American doctors. Dedicated to

promoting the collective interests of physicians and patients of African descent, the NMA was a perfect match for Maxey. In an interview with *Contemporary Black Biography* (CBB) he stated, "My goals are those of NMA--to eliminate health disparities that exist between underserved Americans and the general population."

Chose Medicine over Law

Randall W. Maxey was born on December 1, 1941, and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio along with two brothers and a sister. His mother, Laura Roberto Maxey, was an elementary school teacher and his father, Jerry Maxey Sr., was a [mortician](#). "I lived in a middle middle-class neighborhood in Madisonville, a suburb of Cincinnati," Maxey told CBB. "For a while we lived in the [upstairs](#) apartment of my mother's sister's house. It was great. We had chickens, pigeons, an orchard, a [goldfish](#) pond." When his father opened the Maxey Funeral Home in Cincinnati, the family moved in and Maxey finished out his childhood there.

After graduating from high school, Maxey attended the Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science and became a licensed mortician and embalmer. "It was something my father wanted me to do, following in his footsteps," he told CBB. Maxey had other ideas. After earning a degree in [pharmacy](#) from the University of Cincinnati in 1966, he started thinking about graduate school. "I was torn," he told CBB. "I wanted to be a civil rights lawyer, because I was very into Martin Luther King and what he stood for. But I also wanted to be a physician. So, I applied to both law and medical schools and got accepted into both." Maxey chose law at the University of Cincinnati partly because he had landed a job on the campus. "I was the first black assistant dean of men at the University of Cincinnati, so that was going to pay for my law school," he told CBB. However, law school didn't last long. "After only a few weeks I realized that I was better suited to medicine," he told CBB.

Maxey entered a dual M.D./Ph.D. program being launched by Washington, D.C.'s Howard University. "I was the very first student [in the program]," he told CBB. During the six-year course of study, Maxey also worked at Howard. "I was a faculty member and a department head in the college of [dentistry](#). I also taught basic sciences and was a graduate assistant in the department of biology," he told CBB. After graduating with a degree in medicine and a doctorate in [cardiovascular](#) pharmacology, Maxey did three years of internships in internal medicine at Harlem Hospital Medical Center in conjunction with Columbia University in New York. This was followed by a two-year fellowship at the Downstate Medical Center and Kings County Hospital of Brooklyn, where he specialized in [nephrology](#). Focusing on the diagnosis and treatment of kidney diseases, nephrologists often manage the long-term healthcare of patients with kidney disease, including the administration of dialysis treatment. From 1976 to 1978 Maxey served as the director of the [ambulatory](#) dialysis unit at University Hospital in Brooklyn. He also remained active in academia, serving as a clinical assistant professor at University Hospital and assistant professor of medicine at the State University of New York.

Began Medical Career

In 1978 Maxey moved to [Inglewood](#), California, where he became an attending physician at several area hospitals including [Brotman Medical Center](#), Cedars Sinai Medical Center,

Centinela Hospital Medical Center, Daniel Freeman Memorial Hospital, Daniel Freeman Marina Hospital, and Robert F. Kennedy Medical Center. The following year he married Gem Maxey, with whom he would have five children. "My proudest moment was marriage to my wife and the birth of each of my children," Maxey told *CBB*.

In 1980 Maxey took on a position of clinical assistant professor in medicine at Los Angeles's Charles R. Drew University, a job he would hold for eight years. In the 1980s he also served as the director of nephrology at both Daniel Freeman Memorial Hospital and the Robert F. Kennedy Medical Center. In 1986 he became the medical director at the Pacific Coast Dialysis Center, later renamed [DaVita](#). A few years later, he also assumed the title of supervising medical director at the Los Angeles Dialysis Center. In the 1990s Maxey became interested in cases of renal failure in Guam. He became licensed to practice there and in 1992 became an attending physician at Guam Memorial Hospital. From 1993 to 1998 he also served as supervising medical director at the Pacific Dialysis Center in Dededo, Guam, and from 1996 to 1998 he held the same position at the Guam Renal Care Hemodialysis Center in [Agana](#). He also published several medical papers on renal failure among South Pacific Islanders in Guam.

In 2004 Maxey was still serving as an attending physician at several hospitals in California and Guam and held the title of medical director at several dialysis centers. He also continued to teach, research, lecture, and publish. According to a press release published on the NMA website, "During the course of his career, he has made outstanding contributions to research regarding the prevention and treatment of renal failure, especially in cases complicated by [cardiovascular disease](#)." He has received numerous awards for his work over the years, though they are not what Maxey reflects on when contemplating his accomplishments. "Workwise, really my proudest moments are when a patient thanks me," he told *CBB*. "; That is more [gratification](#) than all the money or awards in the world. And I am [glad](#) that there have been a lot of those moments. You get honors, promotions, but they are not on the same level of [satisfaction](#) as knowing that someone really means it when they thank you and tell you that you have really contributed to their life." He continued, "As a dialysis doctor, I do a lot of counseling. Not just medical, also personal. I am involved in all parts of the patient's life, family, job, personal issues. In this field you have to deal with the whole individual. Often they are depressed, they don't see the light at the end of the tunnel. I deal with that in addition to their medical needs."

Advocated for African-American Patients and Doctors

Maxey has always been a doctor concerned with more than medical needs. His early commitment to the [tenets](#) of Dr. King has pushed him to fight for medical access for all Americans, particularly underserved minority communities. As a student at Howard he started the school's Mississippi Project, which helped provide healthcare to those affected by the civil rights movement. In 1990 he founded the Church Health Network, a non-profit organization which strived to reach underserved patients through their churches and communities. In addition, he published several articles on healthcare delivery to minorities. Over the years his focus of concern has settled on the healthcare disparities that exist between minority and non-minority patients. It is an issue that he has witnessed daily in the healthcare industry and even in his own home. He recalled in an interview on the *Iconoclast* Web site that his young son once visited the school nurse because of a skin [irritation](#) and was told, "all little black boys have skin [rashes](#)."

Maxey concluded in the interview, "Black people's [medical] problems are discounted all the time."

Since finishing medical school, Maxey has also been a strong voice for African-American doctors. He joined the NMA in 1972 and became a very active member. He served on several committees within the organization and presented papers at their national conventions. In 1996 he was elected to the board of trustees. In 1999 he served as secretary of the board, and in 2001 he moved up to chairman. In 2002, the 25,000-plus member organization elected him national president, a post he assumed in August 2003 at the group's annual convention in Philadelphia. "I think I bring a skill set of broad knowledge of clinical medicine [to the post]," he told *The Philadelphia Tribune* upon his inauguration. "I also bring a lot of enthusiasm and a lot of energy and a fair amount of [impatience](#) to see that things get done."

One focus of Maxey's impatience has been the ongoing health [disparity](#) that he had witnessed throughout his career. "Right now our major concern is that there are significant major health disparities that exist and these health disparities are leading to excess deaths in all categories, excess [morbidity](#), excess hospitalization and we need to stop it," Maxey told *The Philadelphia Tribune*. He planned to lead the NMA in this battle on several fronts, including encouraging increased participation of black patients and doctors in clinical trials and research. "We don't know that the current therapeutic and medical recommendations that are out there now really fit African-Americans," he told *The Philadelphia Tribune*. He also planned on fighting on the policy level. "I see us as being a very important health policy organization that helps create and drive health policies," he continued in the interview with *The Philadelphia Tribune*. To that end, Maxey has spoken on Capital Hill on issues ranging from the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 to the Closing the Gap on Healthcare Act of 2004.

Maxey and the NMA have also focused on the doctors that treat minorities. "We want to make sure that doctors are both culturally competent and health literate and can meet the needs of underserved American populations," Maxey told *CBB*. Related to this is the problem of a lack of African-American doctors. In a press release posted on the NMA website Maxey said, "The loss of practicing physicians in the African American community also negatively impacts patients. Patients may have to seek physicians outside of their communities; they may have to find a physician willing to take on new patients or one who has the interest or cultural competence to understand and address their special needs." The NMA hoped to combat this loss of minority physicians by exposing minority youth at a young age to the possibility of healthcare careers and also extending the NMA's already-existing mentoring program.

Maxey's presidency at the NMA was scheduled to end in August of 2004, after which he planned to open a holistic medical center, "where my approach will be a combination of so-called western medicine and other schools of knowledge, including spiritual healing," he told *CBB*. Planned for the center was a meditation center and several [contemplative](#) gardens. Though it seemed a new venue for a man who had spent his life fighting against kidney disease and for patients' rights, the holistic center is actually a perfect marriage of his commitment to healthcare and his belief that patients should have access to healthcare that meets their needs culturally as well as physically.

Awards

Selected: Howard University, President's Service to Howard Award, 1972; Operation PUSH, Cincinnati Chapter, Academic Excellence Award, 1972; Minority Health Institute, Service Award, 1991; Charles R. Drew Medical Society, President's Award, 1994; Howard University, Dean's Special Service Award, Outstanding Alumni, 2002.

Further Reading

Periodicals

- *Jet*, August 25, 2003.
- *Modern Healthcare*, August 11, 2003.
- *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 8, 2003.

On-line

- Graham, Judith, "Black-white Health Gap Grows; Disparity Rises as Care Improves," *Iconoclast*, www.iconocast.com/H/Health1_News16_04/Health6.htm (May 28, 2004).
- "Randall W. Maxey, MD, Installed as 104th president of the National Medical Association," *National Medical Association*, www.nmanet.org/pr_080703.htm (May 28, 2004).
- "Statement by Randall W. Maxey, M.D., PhD," *National Medical Association*, www.nmanet.org/about_from_president.htm (May 28, 2004).

Other

- Additional information for this profile was obtained through an interview with Dr. Randall Maxey on June 14, 2003.