

Good health dependent on good social conditions

Good health care depends on a community being able to provide meaningful employment, the eradication of poverty, safe and affordable housing, and adequate nutrition, says Sister Nuala Kenny.

Good social conditions are more important to health care than are the development of new technologies and treatments, Kenny told the annual Catholic Health Association of Saskatchewan convention.

“As a pediatrician, I came to realize that no medical advance could improve the health and well being of children as much as meaningful employment for single-parent moms.”

Kenny, a Sister of Charity, challenged delegates to think more broadly about how to live the healing and reconciling ministry of Jesus.

The mission and ethics of Catholic health care must be connected with the social justice teachings of the Church, she said.

Kenny noted a contradiction in the current approach to health care, which is focused on acute care. It often neglects to address the long-term implications of treatment, the situation that awaits a person on discharge, or the socio-economic determinates of health.

“Hospitals are great places if you are sick, but they do very little to promote the health and well being of populations.”

People are hooked on technology, she said.

“More people in Canada in the 21st century believe in medical technology than believe in God,” she said. “They believe if they get to the right hospital, with the right doctor, with the right piece of equipment, they will be saved.”