



EDITORIAL

Keeping the Public Healthy During a Global Pandemic

Amy Ferketich

The Ohio State University, College of Public Health, Columbus, OH

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I welcome you to the June 2021 issue of the *Ohio Journal of Public Health (OJPH)*. Some of you may be reading this issue while working from home, still, after 16 months. For others, work may have resumed outside the home or, perhaps, your work setting did not change at all during the pandemic. No matter where you are working, or what you do in the field of public health, you have probably been told by someone not in the field that “everyone knows what public health is now!” as a result of COVID-19 and the public health response that it demanded. Awareness of public health as a profession has indeed increased considerably during the pandemic.¹ Perhaps as a direct result, applications to public health education programs increased 20% to 30% during the pandemic.^{2,3} This is certainly good news for the profession. However, we all know that the work we do to keep the public healthy goes way beyond pandemic preparedness and infectious disease control and the Journal continues to be a means for communicating this important work to colleagues.

The current issue of OJPH features a special COVID-19 section that includes two research articles and one Op-Ed, two additional research articles, and four public health practice articles. Most of the work presented in these papers took place during the pandemic, which demonstrates a strong commitment not only to continuing the work to keep the public healthy in Ohio, but also to writing up the findings for this issue. This issue again features a cover design by Whitney Baxter and Gad Owusu, undergraduate students in the Department of Design at The Ohio State University. The design was inspired by several articles in this issue.

The two COVID-19 articles report on the Ohio COVID-19 Survey (OCS), which is a weekly survey of adults in Ohio that started in April 2020 and continues today. The OCS is used by Governor DeWine and his staff to make decisions about how to respond to the pandemic from a public health and economic recovery perspective. The article by Berzofsky et al describes the methodology and implementation of the survey. The OCS is the result of a longstanding partnership between State agencies, public colleges in Ohio, and a survey research firm. Frazier and colleagues report on some of the preliminary OCS findings related to the health and economic impact of the pandemic. The Op-Ed by Carney-Knisley, focused on social isolation among the elderly, was motivated by his grandmother’s unfortunate experience in a hospital during the pandemic. It ends with a call to do better for the elderly, a group already vulnerable to the negative impact of social isolation.

The research article by Lowe et al maps substance abuse treatment deserts (defined as no treatment within a 15-minute drive) in a 13-county region in Southwest Ohio. Unfortunately, over half of individuals live in a methadone treatment desert and nearly 1 in 5 live in other substance use treatment deserts. Maziarz and colleagues report on the results from a survey with nursing home directors in Northwest Ohio to examine their support for, and behaviors associated with, educating nursing home





residents about sexually transmitted diseases. Overall, support for such education remains high but delivery is low.

The four public health practice articles touch on different issues related to public health programs in the state. Two of the articles are focused on professional students in Ohio. In one, Dadlani and colleagues report on their social determinants of health screening tool and community resource referral process that were incorporated into their student-run free clinic in Northeast Ohio. This project allows the authors to determine the resources that are in greatest need among patients who seek care at the clinic. In the second paper, Petrak et al reported on the Toledo Naloxone Outreach Program's student education training on naloxone distribution. The results suggest that training is effective in increasing confidence in discussing substance abuse, and its treatment, with patients and family members.

The other two public health practice articles report on two important programs in Ohio. One is Sight for All United, a program in Mahoning County with a goal of providing care for underserved individuals. In the paper, Parikh et al summarize the types of services provided to individuals between 2016 and 2020. The second program involves the development and delivery of a toolkit that contains information about medical treatments, such as vaccines, that need to be delivered rapidly during emergencies. The toolkit was designed for local public health agencies and the article by Baker and Paton describes the feasibility assessment performed with local public health professionals.

This issue marks my last as Editor. As I noted in December, Professor Sheryl Chatfield, of Kent State University, is the new Editor of OJPH. I feel honored to have been asked by Lois Hall and Joe Ebel to serve as the Founding Editor of OJPH. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet other scholars, educators, and practitioners in Ohio. Serving as Founding Editor also taught me a lot about how to start a journal and manage the process that leads to a full issue. I have truly enjoyed working with the Associate Editors, Editorial Board, and the wonderful copy editor, Darlene Bowers. We can all agree that Darlene's articles are beautifully formatted! As I say farewell, know that I will continue to advocate for the important work that you do in Ohio to keep the public healthy. And I will support the Ohio Public Health Association in other ways as it serves to be the "voice" of public health in Ohio.

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