

September 23–27, 2019

2019 Points of Engagement

Advancing Public and Population Health

- Population health encompasses the health outcomes of a group of individuals, including the distribution of outcomes within the group.¹ Population health workers assess the health status of a specific population or community and attend to health concerns that may disproportionately affect it. Valuable stakeholders include government, healthcare providers, public and private payers, and public health organizations.
- Concurrently, public health efforts aim to protect and improve the health of people and communities by promoting healthy lifestyles, researching disease and injury prevention, and detecting, preventing and responding to chronic illnesses and infectious diseases.² Traditionally, the role of advancing public health has fallen on state and local public health departments.¹
- Advancing public health and population health efforts will be critical to overcoming the problems that drive poor health outcomes and in turn will facilitate supporting healthy communities. Communities must learn how to identify linkages with existing mobile/telehealth/social media technologies. The drive toward smart cities and communities may be most impactful in advancing public and population health, particularly when they are able to interoperate across core health, human services and non-health sector systems, including the following six critical domains:
 - Emergency medical services
 - Environmental health
 - Health systems (including public health)
 - Human and social services
 - Public safety
 - Transportation

Modernizing the Public Health Infrastructure

- Public health surveillance is an interactive system of government public health agencies at the federal, state, local, tribal and territorial levels, working with

¹ <https://www.improvingpopulationhealth.org/blog/what-is-population-health.html>

² <https://www.cdcfoundation.org/what-public-health>

healthcare providers and the public to detect, report and prevent illness and death. It consists of continuous and systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of health-related data that can be used to inform, implement and evaluate public health interventions.³

- Our nation's public health surveillance infrastructure is antiquated and often relies on obsolete surveillance methods, leading to delayed detection and response to public health threats.
- The development of modern, 21st-century public health data systems has long been ignored and remains woefully underfunded. We must commit to transforming our public health surveillance into a state-of-the-art, secure and fully interoperable system that will save lives and get ahead of chronic, emerging and urgent threats to our public health.
- Federal- and state-focused policy initiatives may strengthen states' health IT infrastructure by building a culture of health through smart communities/cities initiatives, which utilize advances in transportation, energy and information technology to enhance a city's livability, productivity, sustainability and resilience. State policies that enable and promote the intelligent implementation of emerging communications, transportation and energy technologies, and the public-private partnerships that can leverage these technologies, can help states access a variety of economic and livability benefits.⁴

Accelerating Workforce Development

- A modern public health workforce is essential to harnessing the power of new technologies that promote better, faster public health data. A well-trained workforce is the foundation for continuing to support healthy communities.
- As we continue our evolution into a 21st-century health ecosystem, a robust and diverse workforce that includes engaged clinical and technical professionals is essential to realize the full potential of this transformation.
- The growing interest among policymakers and practitioners for data and information about population health and health-related issues indicates the need for enhanced analytical methods and cross-sector data exchange to support evidence-based policymaking and legislation. This shift also calls for training, peer exchanges and the creation of new positions for data scientists, strategists, epidemiologists and informaticists.

³ https://www.who.int/topics/public_health_surveillance/en/

⁴ <http://www.ncsl.org/aboutus/ncsl-foundation-for-state-legislatures/smart-communities-public-private-partnership.aspx>

Expanding Access to Broadband and Telehealth

- Broadband access is critical to supporting economic and educational opportunities. However, it can also play an important role in improving overall health. Access to reliable and affordable broadband and telehealth services is a critical component of supporting healthy communities, as these services have the potential to empower patients and expand access to high-quality care—particularly for underserved and rural populations.
- Unfortunately, the digital divide in the U.S. is all too real, and there is a great disparity in access to these vital services across our country. Over 21 million Americans, particularly in rural and tribal areas, still lack basic access to broadband.⁵ Research shows this lack of access negatively affects both patients' health and clinicians' ability to provide the care needed to make their communities healthier.⁶ For example, many of these rural areas experience high rates of chronic disease, which could be more effectively controlled with consistent monitoring and early intervention—something that isn't possible without consistent and stable broadband access.

Addressing Social Determinants of Health

- Social determinants of health (SDOH) are the conditions under which people are born, grow, live, work and age⁷. They are the social, economic, environmental and other nonmedical factors that can have an impact on a person's overall well-being and health outcomes. Examples of SDOH include housing, public transportation, education, food and nutrition, social support and human interaction, and public safety.
- Much of what affects our health and wellness is “upstream” and extends beyond medical issues. In fact, up to 80% of our health is affected by factors external to the health system.⁸ In order to improve our health ecosystem and support healthy communities, we must also support these underlying social needs, particularly in underserved communities.
- In order to better leverage the existing and ongoing accumulation of evidence related to SDOH, interdisciplinary efforts are needed to better understand the impact of SDOH in our daily lives and how it can improve our overall care for patients and communities.

⁵ <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-357271A1.pdf>

⁶ https://www.fcc.gov/sites/default/files/connect2health.key_findings.pdf

⁷ <https://www.aafp.org/about/policies/all/social-determinants.html>

⁸ <https://nam.edu/social-determinants-of-health-101-for-health-care-five-plus-five/>