A Message from the Editor

These are very difficult, trying, and uncertain times—economically, environmentally, politically, and socially. This issue of *Public Health Reports* reflects on some of this uncertainty from a public health perspective.

The Feature article by Frumkin and colleagues on peak petroleum takes a critical look at the impact of the world's diminishing oil supplies on public health and medical care, with a focus on medical supplies and equipment, transportation, energy generation, and food production. The invited Commentary by Osterholm and Kelley expands on the Frumkin et al. article by recognizing that oil is just one part, albeit an extremely important part, of nonrenewable energy resources that the world is consuming at an alarming rate. Osterholm and Kelley note that 50% of U.S. electricity is generated from coal-fired power plants and that the "miraculous improvement in life expectancy in the 20th century" was directly related to improved sanitation that resulted from the use of electricity. A third article that touches on the same theme is a review by Weiss of the book, *Overshoot: The Ecological Basis of Revolutionary Change*. Although the book was published 27 years ago, Weiss takes the view that *Overshoot* is still a very relevant and visionary book that illustrates the detrimental impact our ravenous appetite for technology and limited resources will have on future generations.

Another interesting and timely article by Morens et al. presents a lessons-learned comparison of guidelines developed following the 1918 flu pandemic and current guidelines from the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. As the public health community continues to prepare for another likely flu pandemic, this article revisits important recommendations and valuable lessons learned 90 years ago. The likelihood of a pandemic is probably greater now given the recent global economic crisis and the adverse impact it will have on public health budgets, especially in third-world countries. More and more, major infectious diseases such as influenza will become matters of national security.

The *Surgeon General's Perspectives* addresses the short- and long-term consequences of underage drinking, with a focus on preventing and reducing underage alcohol consumption. The information presented is valuable not only for parents and adolescents, but also for public health practitioners who can help implement the Surgeon General's strategies and recommendations in homes, schools, communities, and universities.

Having just returned from the 2008 American Public Health Association (APHA) annual meeting as we were going to press, I was impressed with the robust state of public health activities in the national and international arena. Undergraduate and graduate school programs are in good health and growing both in number and enrollment, perhaps reflecting the ideological importance of disease and injury prevention. The theme for the conference, "Public Health Without Borders," reinforced the important message of one world and one health. This positive worldwide view of public health is mirrored in the strength of *PHR* as measured by the increasing quantity and quality of manuscript submissions to the journal from around the world; the number of submissions to *PHR* has increased 80% since 2004 to an estimated 450 new manuscripts in 2008. And we expect to exceed that figure in 2009. As the oldest journal of public health in the U.S.—publishing since 1878—we look forward to continued dialog with practitioners and researchers worldwide on the important public health topics of the day.

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