

# A Message from the Editor

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As I reviewed the articles for this issue of *Public Health Reports (PHR)*, I found myself almost breathless considering the breadth and depth of the challenges we face in public health. This issue of *PHR* does not address one particular theme; rather, it covers the spectrum of what a public health practitioner might face on a given day. It is not just the diverse nature of the concerns that we in public health face, but also the rapidity of change—in our culture, in technology, and in our methods—that leaves me somewhat awestruck at the work you, our public health practitioners, do on a daily basis. So, I would like to start this issue with a profound “thank-you” to all of you who have dedicated your professional lives to making a positive difference in the health of the public. This is hard work, it is important work, and you deserve recognition for your tremendous efforts.

So, what might a public health practitioner face on a given day? First, we frequently face questions about when to test, where to test, and the impact of screening and testing. The two brief reports in this issue highlight the potential impact of using rapid testing methods—one for influenza and the other for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). The HIV screening report also underscores how staying abreast of the aforementioned cultural changes can help improve our outreach into certain populations—in this case, previously untested men who have sex with men who attended a Gay Pride event.

Public health is also responsible for and often challenged by the need for surveillance and trend data. The article on tuberculosis burden among American Indians/Alaska Natives underscores the difficulties with case reporting and the variability among different systems. At the same time, the practice article on the

National HIV Surveillance System is a testament to how sustained efforts across many jurisdictions have led to building a national system even with many disparate surveillance systems in play. The article on drug use among drivers in fatal crashes illustrates the importance of monitoring trends over time to inform interventions and preventive efforts.

The public health workforce has to adapt not only to cultural, technological, and methodological changes, but also to statutory changes. The *Law and the Public's Health* column in this issue of *PHR* discusses the impact of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) on inmates at a time when the ACA is front and center on the nightly news, and correctional health has finally been recognized as playing a vital role in overall public health.<sup>1</sup> To round off the day's work, public health practitioners must also look to the future, determining how best to disseminate knowledge and train the next generation of public health practitioners. The articles about dissemination efforts among public health researchers and core courses for the master of public health degree address these important topics.

That is the type of work you do all day, every day, and we dedicate this issue to you. There is a reason you are tired when you lay down to catch your breath each night.

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## REFERENCE

1. Fazel S, Baillargeon J. The health of prisoners. *Lancet* 2011;377:956-65.