

Place Matters: At the Intersection of Delaware Medicine and Population Health

Timothy E. Gibbs, MPH, NPMc,¹ Omar A. Khan, MD, MHS,² and Daniel J. Meara, MD, DMD³

1. Executive Director, Delaware Academy of Medicine
2. President-Elect, Delaware Academy of Medicine
3. President, Delaware Academy of Medicine

Even before Dr. Kestner's article (published in the August 2000 Physician focus) there had been a meeting of the minds between the Boards of Christiana Care Health System and the Delaware Academy of Medicine. This is commemorated in the plaque placed along with the gallery of presidents of the Academy along the south wall of the Main Auditorium of the John H. Ammon education center (Figure 1). It reads:

“The Delaware Academy of Medicine was founded in 1930 by fifteen physicians and one dentist. The stated purposes of their new organization were: to provide a meeting place for medical, dental, and other organizations interested in the health and welfare of Delaware citizens; to maintain a scientific library to aid physician and dentists and other seeking information in the field of medicine and dentistry; to promote professional and lay health education; and to stimulate and encourage medical education research.

Figure 1.



Between 1932 and 2006, the Academy of Medicine was located in the City of Wilmington in the former National Bank of Delaware building. In 1930-31, that structure was moved from its original location at 6th and Market Street in Wilmington and rebuilt on Lovering Avenue.

In 1999, the boards of Christiana Care Health System and the Delaware Academy of Medicine formed a unique strategic alliance to better serve their missions and communities. As a result, in November 2006, the offices of the Academy were moved to its current location on the ground floor of the John H. Ammon Medical Education Center. The Lewis B. Flinn medical library located on the first floor of the Education Center is a merger of the original Delaware Academy of Medicine and Christiana Hospital Libraries.”

Along with the gallery of the 39 presidents of the Academy of Medicine, the lower wall outside of the main entrance to the Ammon center announces this partnership with the simple signage “Delaware Academy of Medicine” (Figure 2).

Figure 2.



Countless meetings were conducted by combinations of Delaware Academy of Medicine Board Members and Christiana Care leadership between the publication of Dr. Kestner’s article in “Physician Focus” in 2000 and 2005. First, they explored concept; later they engaged architects, designers, library consultants, archivists, and technology professionals to envision the space; and finally the funders – individual, foundation, and corporate – to support this ambitious partnership.

Along the way, real estate and legal professionals were engaged to assure the soundness of the initiative and that everyone’s best interests were kept in mind. This resulted in the final partnership agreement.

It took over a year of logistics and planning to prepare the Academy of Medicine for its move from Lovering Avenue in Wilmington to Christiana Hospital in Newark. On November 9th of 2006 the move started in Wilmington, and on November 16th the move concluded in Newark. The Academy of Medicine, with support of many, had a new home with a 10-year lease, renewable for an additional four 10 year terms. Eight years of planning and work culminated in a 50-year agreement between two respected Delaware institutions.

In our first years in the John H. Ammon Medical education center we naturally partnered heavily with the staff of the Lewis B. flinn Library (Figure 3) and our colleagues in physician relations. We shared staff, resources, and space on the first floor of the Ammon center including the Gail P. Gill Consumer Health Library program.

Figure 3.



We assisted in the planning and promotion of scores of professional and consumer education programs in a time before the centralization of CME activity under Academic Affairs and promotion under External Affairs. To this day, we partner on and promote many CCHS education programs, including Mini Medical School, the Global Health lecture series, and many subject-specific conferences chaired by CCHS and community physicians.

Over the years, the Academy refocused its energies on education and the promotion of public health as we exited the library services business line. In the summer of 2016, the Gail P. Gill Library collection was merged with the Lewis B. Flinn Library collection, and that ended an era for the Academy that was born with the Academy in 1930. That space on the main floor, as well as back office space in the Flinn Library, was turned back to Christiana Care Health Systems for expansion of other critical services.

Aligning with a statewide move towards population and public health, in 2015 the Delaware Academy of Medicine also became the State of Delaware's affiliate of the American Public Health Association. Shortly thereafter, the new Delaware Public Health Association started publication of the Delaware Journal of Public Health, the only peer-reviewed journal dedicated to public health in our state.

Display cases in the Flinn Library, purchased as a part of the plan to showcase items from the Academy of Medicine's collection, were filled. Additional display cases were purchased for placement in the hallway adjacent to the main auditorium.

It was deemed essential that the history of medicine, dentistry, and public health be displayed as a part of the larger educational mission of both organizations. Locating our core collection on the lower level in a secure, climate controlled location was important as well.

Over the years, we have served as an institutionally neutral ground for healthcare providers and indeed all those concerned with improved health, from Delaware hospitals and private practice to meet, exchange views, and collectively advance medicine and public health in our state.

In keeping with community partnerships, the Academy of Medicine location is also the administrative home to the Delaware Academy of Family Physicians, Delaware Nurses Association, the Delaware chapter of the American College of Surgeons, and the Delaware Academy of Physician Assistants. These four professional membership organizations are partners in our commitment to placing the patient at the center of the care paradigm by training and collaborating across disciplines. Leadership and membership in all of these affiliates are drawn from our leading health care institutions. Location and proximity are, again, essential to this mission.

All of this has been facilitated by a relatively modest but important location, near the physician entrance to the Ammon center at Christiana Hospital. Being located proximate to the epicenter of medicine in Delaware, in one of the nation's largest hospitals has provided access and partnership to all area institutions. Special mention must be made of our partnership with Delaware's community physicians, many of whom do not come to the hospital for patient care any longer, but who remain engaged in the health system through coming to Academy-sponsored and partnered meetings and events.

We celebrate and honor our 10th anniversary of partnership with Christiana Care in the John H. Ammon Medical Education Center. The opening preamble of our foundation documents sums an essential concept up simply and eloquently:

“Medicine, more than any other profession, undergoes constant change.”

The transformation of medicine, the health of our community, and the common goals shared between Christiana Care Health System and the Academy/DPHA are a constant reminder of the enduring value of partnership, and that our work will *always* evolve.

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