

Data to Decision Making

Rita M. Landgraf

Director, Partnership for Healthy Communities; Professor of Practice and Distinguished Health & Social Services Administrator in Residence; College of Health Sciences; University of Delaware

“Show me the Data” is a common theme for many sectors, inclusive of researchers, educators, policy makers, program implementers, consumers, entrepreneurs, big business, non-profits, hospitals ... well you get the idea! We all rely on data that drives our decisions. The intent of this edition of the Delaware Journal of Public Health is to share some meaningful data that will inform you on the overall health and wellbeing of our state population. Several authors will also share how sectors are using data to align efforts for collective impact to produce healthier outcomes.

As former Cabinet Secretary of the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), I saw firsthand the value of data mining, data trending, and utilizing data to support the prioritization of issues affecting Delaware’s citizens. Data was also utilized to monitor the performance of DHSS and the achievement of meaningful outcomes relative to its mission. I was proud of the use of data to inform and direct our decisions, but was also keenly aware that we were merely scratching the surface: the promise of embedded data analytics in concert with translation is clearly not yet fully achieved.

We, as a society, rely on the integrity of data, and value scientists for ensuring data validity. Even in data driven environments, many times data is collected without the benefit of translation; it is not applied to real life practice across the multitude of sectors. Collecting data for data’s sake is a mere exercise of process, with limited to no return on the investment. However, the *translation* of data - for a greater appreciation and understanding of trends and outcomes **across audiences** - will produce better universal decision-making and factual interpretations, gain a greater return on investment, advance evidence based practices and known outcomes, and create a culture of health. Through data, we can create predictability models that lead to real time preventative solutions and/or solid intervention actions that truly promote positive health outcomes at both the individual and community level.

Now that would be truly transformative.

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