

From John Snow to Vaccine Hesitancy

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Public health is not a “one and done” goal: it is always changing, and what worked at one time ([John Snow](#) – no, not the guy from Game of Thrones – changing the head of the water pump to stop a cholera outbreak) may not work later (it’s a lot easier to sanitize water nowadays than it was in 1854). Events like the APHA Annual Meeting and Expo let public health professionals discuss what is working, and what might need a little finessing.

One of my favorite aspects of public health is that, not only is it everywhere, from immunizations to cleaning up after your dog; it also spans personal histories, socioeconomic statuses, and lived experiences. I was able to sit in on presentations, panel discussions, and lectures that ran the gambit from the opioid crisis to climate change. I interacted with people keen to change labor laws at a maternal and child health town hall. At the opening session, we heard from the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention telling us that addiction is “a chronic, relapsing medical condition, and not a moral failing.” There were multiple discussions about Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and how they go on to affect people for the rest of their lives.

Public health spans everything – I always tell my student interns that “you give me a subject, I’ll tell you how public health is a part of it.” It is ever changing with new science and discoveries, new medicines and therapies, and changing thoughts and issues. In this era of climate change, vaccine hesitancy, and the addiction/opioid crisis, public health is more important than ever, and what we learn from the APHA Annual Meeting and Expo will help us be better able to navigate these issues, and whatever else may come.

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