

In This Issue

Omar A. Khan, MD, MHS¹ & Timothy E. Gibbs, MPH²

1. Editor-in-Chief, Delaware Journal of Public Health; Chair, Delaware Public Health Association Advisory Council

2. Executive Director, Delaware Academy of Medicine/Delaware Public Health Association

Since the early days of the internet and personal computers, we have seen explosive growth in the use of technology in the delivery of human services, planning, and more recently in managing “big data.” Even in the early days of the internet, a core group of thought leaders met in Washington, DC, on a monthly basis to discuss things like information and access redlining – that phenomenon that saw low income, remote, and rural communities with little or very primitive access to the “information superhighway” for decades.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we witnessed the profound disadvantage to individuals and to communities who were marginally connected and technology literate. Early in the pandemic, a national awareness developed around “net access” as being an additional social determinant of health. Access and literacy joined other public health utilities we take for granted – notably potable water, effective sewer systems, and a reliable power grid.

If one had no internet, old or no technology, and/or minimal technology literacy, during the pandemic there were major impacts:

- 1) No or limited ability to work remotely,
- 2) No or limited ability to seek new employment,
- 3) No or limited ability of remote learning for children,
- 4) No or limited ability to maintain social connection to family and friends in a time when physical distancing was essential, and
- 5) No or limited ability to engage in telemedicine services.

Within the human services and health care delivery realms, the importance of – and dependence on – technology has been in place for some time. This issue covers some of the many ways in which technology is deployed to address individual and public health challenges. From big data analysis to equitable care, health informatics to data mapping, we hope you enjoy this issue of the Journal.

This issue also contains a special section on the 91st Annual Meeting of the Delaware Academy of Medicine / Delaware Public Health Association (see pages x to xx). This was a truly unique event, where we piloted a vaccine certification in order to attend, and made available both on-site and on-line options for attendee comfort and safety. For many, this was the first large professional gathering since the pandemic started 15 months ago. By design, the in-person attendance was limited, but with in-person and Zoom attendance we saw a robust and engaged membership. Governor John C. Carney, Jr. and First Lady Tracey Quillen Carney were recognized with the Lewis B. Flinn President’s award for their lifelong work in the fields of education and public health. The Executive Director’s Public Health Recognition was presented to the Delaware Rural Health Initiative and accepted by Division of Public Health Director, Dr. Karyl Rattay. Lieutenant Governor Bethany Hall-Long, a passionate public health advocate,

provided opening comments to the audience, and the keynote speaker, Dr. Geoff Tabin wrapped up the evening with an inspiring lecture on overcoming obstacles, be they mountains or healthcare.

As always, we welcome your comments and feedback, on the promise of technology in healthcare, and on your own ideas and views about anything we do involving Delaware health sciences, medicine & public health. Thank you as always, and enjoy the issue!

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