

Letter from the Guest Editors

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We are humbled to have been asked to be guest editors for this important publication, particularly because this edition focuses on the intersection of technology and public health.

In the last year, the terms “unprecedented” and “extraordinary” have been used more times than we can count to describe the new paradigms that the pandemic has invoked in our work lives, in our home lives, in our education systems, and in our healthcare system.

Never has there been a time we can recall that technology was pushed to the forefront so quickly. For many, our homes became our workspaces as offices shuttered. Our children now required a laptop and a corner in the house to continue their learning as schools closed their campuses. Doctors office visits were often conducted over videoconferencing platforms. And we held virtual happy hours and social distancing birthday parties to try and stay connected to one another and maintain our sanity.

Thankfully, technology is widely available, and our organizations have a high adoption rate. Maintaining meetings with our teams, reviewing budgets, connecting to customers and constituents, and otherwise conducting day-to-day business shifted rather swiftly to an online medium, and we were able to keep the engines running. It seemed relatively easy, at least for those of us that had the capacity and made the investments for this time many thought might never come.

What became immediately apparent to us are the vast divides in our country. The differences between the haves and the have nots. The digital divide that we were all likely somewhat aware of prior to the pandemic became front and center. The community shifted immediately to try and solve challenges that had been true but largely unsolved for decades. We could no longer ignore or accept that some households could not connect to the internet. How would children in those homes learn if the only option were on a laptop? How could those homes access healthcare if the best option were a video conference with their doctor? How could they apply for benefits if they could not get online? You will read about some of the solutions and lessons learned through the articles in this edition.

And, although technology could solve many of the challenges brought by the pandemic and be used to battle the spread of the disease itself, there were also unintended consequences. The countless hours in front of a screen, multitudes of hours in isolation, and the stress of not being in close contact with relatives and friends all took a toll on our mental health. We have listened to many stories of not being able to visit grandma, about children that cannot do something as simple as play with other kids, and about online meeting burnout. The increased anxiety and

depression associated with the pandemic soared, a stark reminder that technology alone cannot solve our challenges.

This issue, however, is not solely focused on the pandemic and technology's role. It is much broader. There are inspiring stories about how technology is used to provide insights into public health issues, innovative ways organizations are using technology and data to solve problems and some stories about the individuals who dedicate their lives to improving our health.

Over the last few months, we worked closely with the team at the Delaware Journal of Public Health and dug into our collective networks to find the innovators, the changemakers, and the researchers that devote their time and talent to leveraging technology for the good of public health in a variety of ways.

We believe what follows in these pages will bring a greater understanding of how technology can be used for good. Technology for the good of our society, that needs to be connected, and for the good of solving problems that will enrich our lives and improve our health. We are thankful for the authors that have given freely of their time to share their work with us in this issue and we are inspired by their work to improve our lives.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the Journal as much as we have enjoyed working to put this together.

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