



DUPONT SUMMIT 2013

..... Pressing Issues, Economic Realities

December 6, 2013 * Historic Whittemore House, Washington, DC

The Policy Studies Organization

Speakers

Angela Matysiak – *George Washington University*

Kathryn Morris – *Southern New Hampshire University*

Preeti Dhillon – *PLAN International USA*

“The History of Public Health Practice: Lessons from the Past for the Future”

Public health professionals have long been captured by the history of their profession. Important historical public health pioneers from the 19th century, such as John Snow who showed that cholera was spread by contaminated drinking water, or Edwin Chadwick who improved sanitary conditions and public health among the urban working poor, illustrate the value of public health to society in the 21st century and continue to inspire, and inform public health practice and policy decisions to this day.¹

For example, 19th century approaches to disease surveillance and epidemiology are as valid today as they were 160 years ago in the fight against re-emerging diseases such as dengue fever, cholera or polio particularly in the developing world with rapid urbanization, poor water supply, sewage disposal, and lack of sanitation.¹ Also, health communication tools used by the 19th century sanitary movement (which included pressure groups, lobbyists and opinion formers) have served as a model for the antismoking and other health campaigns of the 21st century.¹

As public health professionals have examined their professional heritage to help realize even further advancement in the twenty-first century, controversies and setbacks became important lessons learned: For example, the work of the Tuskegee Study of untreated syphilis in Tuskegee, Alabama, from 1932 to 1972, offered important insights into the racial biases among the profession at the time and inspired changes to human research practices.¹



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“The History of Public Health Practice: Lessons from the Past for the Future”

This panel explores the role of the history of public health practice in inspiring future public health strategies, of particular interest today as considerable variation in social, economic and health status persist at home and across the globe, and future health improvement efforts present both a dilemma and challenge.

¹ Berridge, Virginia. “History in the Public Health Tool Kit.” *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, Vol. 55, No. 9 (Sep., 2001), pp. 611-612

¹ Awofeso, Niyi. What’s New About the “New Public Health”? *American Journal of Public Health*, Vol. 94, No. 5 (May 2004), pp. 705-709; Ferrie, Jane E. Cholera, John Snow and the 2013 bicentennial meetings at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, UK. *International Journal of Epidemiology*, Vol 41 (2012), pp. 1501–1502; Farmer, Paul E., Ivers, Louise C. “Cholera in Haiti: The Equity Agenda and the Future of Tropical Medicine.” *American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, Vol. 86, No. 1 (2012), pp. 7–8.

¹ Berridge, Virginia. “Public Health Activism.” *British Medical Journal*, Vol. 335, No. 7633 (Dec. 22 - 29, 2007), pp. 1310-1312.

¹ Cook, Brett D. and Jackson, Tahmika Ruth (2012) Eighty Years of Bad Blood: The Evolution of Human Research after the Tuskegee Study. *Journal of Healthcare, Science and the Humanities*, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 31-58; *Silent Victories: The History and Practice*



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Biographies

Angela Matysiak (Ph.D./MPH) highlights the role of evidence-based health practices in communication during the contagion control era of the 1930s. Based on public health literature from that era, this paper looks at how public health education was used to affect change in behavior regarding disease and hygiene and how lessons learned from case studies can offer insights for designing future health campaigns.

Kathryn Morris (MPH) discusses how preventative medicine characterized public health initiatives and research from the 1940s and through the 1960s by identifying at-risk and vulnerable populations, and focusing on clinical cures. While methods have evolved, current public health frameworks still utilize this era's understanding of interrupting disease reservoirs to address population health today.

Preeti Dhillon (MPH) looks at the role of health care and socioeconomic development during the primary health care era of the 1970s and 1980s and examines how community participation can help us to achieve equity in health care in the developing world.



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The panelists all have background and training in Global Public Health and currently work in DC as public health activists, historians, and educators. Preeti Dhillon (**dhilpreeti@gmail.com**) works at PLAN International USA on projects in developing countries related to water, sanitation, hygiene and health. Angela Matysiak (**matyisak@gwmail.gwu.edu**) is part of a team of historians completing a series of books to be published by the Rockefeller Foundation in 2013, and Vice President at PSO. Kathryn Morris (**kamorris1230@gmail.com**) is a faculty member and course coordinator at Southern New Hampshire University, focusing in teaching public health for health professionals.