



DELAWARE
ACADEMY of
MEDICINE

DPHA
DELAWARE PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

December 2021

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The Board, Advisory Committees, and Staff of the Delaware Academy of Medicine/Delaware Public Health Association would like to wish you a happy, healthy, and safe holiday season!

A Look Back: 2021 Accomplishments

S. John Swanson, MD
President

To our members, stakeholders, and interested parties,

I am pleased to report that significant progress is being made on multiple fronts due to the hard work of the Board of Directors and Staff of the Academy/DPHA. You can read more details below from Dr. Kate Smith and Mr. Tim Gibbs, and I will highlight these additional areas:

As a part of my two-year focus on I/DD, we are successfully integrating a discussion of I/DD into virtually all educational activities – both for the lay public and for our fellow professionals. Raising awareness is one of the most important functions we can all play in addressing public health concerns and areas needing additional focus and health equity.



Partnerships continue to be core and essential to our mission. This month we partnered with the Delaware Chapter of the American Planning Association for the third year in support of their own annual conference and bringing a public health optic to their work and educational offerings. Also, you can read more about the new public-private partnership for "Delaware Health Force" in Mr. Gibbs's section, as well as other activities and events in Dr. Smith's section.

Six new board members were added this year, bringing additional diversity to the board and strength to our bench. Those new board members are:

- Jeffrey Cole, DDS, MBA
- Lee Dresser, MD
- Erin Kavanaugh, MD
- Joseph Kelly, DDS
- Ann Painter, MSN, RN
- Charmaine Wright, MD, MSHP

While COVID-19 remains front and center on most people's minds, we are not just standing by, read more about our Community Health Worker initiative starting in January 2022 in Mr. Gibbs's section below.

I wish you all the best in this season of holidays and a healthy new year.

Kate Smith, MD, MPH
Program Manager



Conferences

Despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Academy/DPHA planned (or helped to plan) conferences focused on public health, stroke education, HIV exposure prophylaxis, communicable disease, and urban planning. These conferences were accredited for continuing medical education, and - due in large part to their virtual nature - reached hundreds of Delawareans.

Education

[Mini-Medical School](#) and the Medical/Dental lecture series at Osher Lifelong Learning Institute shifted to zoom, and we were able to teach and educate people throughout the state on topics like CRISPR and gene editing, breast and prostate health, movement disorders, and the infectious disease. Nine students, ranging from high school through graduate school, have completed [internships](#) with us this year, and we are excited to welcome many more in 2022.

Partnerships

We remain grateful to all our partners, including

- [Aloysius Butler & Clark](#)
- [American Public Health Association](#)
- [ChristianaCare](#)
- [Delaware Department of Health and Social Services](#)
- [Delaware Health Sciences Alliance](#)
- [Delaware Stroke Initiative](#)
- [Maryland Public Health Association](#)
- [Medical Society of Delaware](#)
- [Osher Lifelong Learning Institute](#)
- [Pennsylvania Public Health Association](#)
- [Public Health Management Corporation](#)
- [Quality Insights](#)
- [University of Delaware](#)

More of our 2021 programming will be available in the 2021 Year in Review (available in the first quarter of 2022).

I wish you a happy, healthy, and safe holiday season!

A Look Forward: 2022 and Beyond

Tim Gibbs, MPH
Executive Director

As executive director, I am pleased to announce two programmatic initiatives.

Community Health Workers to Address COVID-19 vaccine uptake and hesitancy.

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, the Public Health Management Corporation filed an application with the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to implement an aggressive community health worker-led operation to address COVID-19 vaccination and vaccine hesitancy in Delaware and Pennsylvania. An \$11.5 million dollar award was announced in November.



The staff of PHMC and the Academy/DPHA have been strategizing and planning how to best utilize these funds on behalf of our communities. The Academy/DPHA will be coordinating operations in the First State, where we have over \$1 million available for community health worker activities between now and November 30, 2022. We will be targeting difficult-to-reach communities, communities of low vaccine adherence, medically underserved areas, and youth/young adults. As these are one-time funds, we will be

underwriting existing personnel as much as possible. Operations will commence on January 15 of next year.

[Apply online here](#) | [Press Release](#) | [Sample Scope of Work](#)

Delaware Health Force

The healthcare needs of Delaware's population are changing on a continuing basis (e.g. the health needs of an aging population, chronic disease management, the retirement of current health care workers, high demand for behavioral health services). The Academy/DPHA has entered into a public-private partnership with the Delaware Health Care Commission (DHCC) to analyze and augment their health care provider licensing data to create a data-driven forecasting and planning tool encompassing all healthcare providers of types in Delaware. The DHCC has provided additional resources to jump-start this initiative.

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically impacted the health care workforce, and brought to light the ways technology like telehealth can be utilized to reach those unable to attend an in-person office visit. Delaware Health Force will advance our understanding of current and emerging trends within and impacting the workforce, and allow us to visualize and better understand underlying population demographics and projected changes in the state. This will provide substantive, solid information to decision-makers and planners, who can then allocate the human and financial resources to better address the healthcare needs in our state.

On behalf of the public/private partnership, the Academy/DPHA has applied for American Rescue Plan Funding for this initiative.

We would also like to note that this initiative does not exist in a vacuum. Our partners include (but are not limited to):

- Delaware Division of Revenue
- Delaware Healthcare Association (DHA)
- Delaware Health Information Network (DHIN)
- Delaware Health Sciences Alliance (DHSA)
- Delaware IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence (INBRE)
- Delaware Nurses Association (DNA)
- Delaware Rural Health Initiative (DRHI)
- Medical Society of Delaware
- The University of Delaware, Center for Drug and Health Studies

Khanversation

Omar Khan, MD, MHS
Co-Chair, Delaware Public Health Association Advisory Council

For fans of the Greek alphabet (and who isn't, when the word 'alphabet' is itself derived from the Greek *alpha* and *beta*?), the last 2 years of COVID-19 have been an unusual kind of classical education.

We have gone through *alpha*, *beta*, *gamma*, *delta*, *epsilon*, *zeta*, *eta*, *theta*, *iota*, *kappa*, *lambda*, *mu*, and *omicron*. For those wondering where the letters *nu* and *xi* went, for probably good reasons the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) decided to omit those. *Nu*, for example, could be confused with the English word 'new', and 'xi' is also a common name in China. Given the unfortunate rise in hate crimes directed at Asian-Americans during the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, it seemed prudent to avoid further confusion. (See [here](#) for an interesting article covering the naming scheme).



Variants using Greek names are not exclusive to the world of deadly viruses. Italian carmakers, for example, are manufacturers of a different kind of dangerous product (mechanical addiction and lifelong repair of faulty electrics). Lancia, now owned by Fiat, named its cars the Beta, Delta, Theta, Gamma, Kappa, Ypsilon, Dilambda, and even Omicron, among others. (Incidentally, while interesting cars, several of these could also be considered variants of concern by US owners left stranded by faulty electrics!).

As of this writing, COVID-19's Omicron variant is spreading rapidly. Its doubling time of fewer than 2 days is significant, and its susceptibility to current prevention methods is a combination of good news/bad

news. The good news, receiving the 2 shot mRNA series (Pfizer or Moderna) plus the appropriate booster, seems to provide protection against Omicron reasonably well. And, infection with Omicron does not seem to result in increased hospitalization rates vs. infection with Delta. All early data, but that's about it for the good news. The bad news- the above is predicated on a vaccinated public. While 88% of Delawareans over 18 have received the 1st shot, only 63% of Delawareans are fully vaccinated. Meanwhile, the weeks since Thanksgiving have seen cases rise again. Whatever we planned on eating that day, we weren't planning to add the alphabet soup of Greek letters- the same letters that now threaten to overwhelm the hospital and public health system.

In 1917, the American Public Health Association first published the Control of Communicable Diseases Manual (CCDM). Over 100 years later, this has grown to encompass several volumes. As co-Editor in Chief of the CCDM Clinical Manual, I get the privilege of working closely with several of those connected with the Academy/DPHA, including Series Editor Prof. David Heymann, recent keynote speaker at our annual meeting (and at the ChristianaCare Holloway Infectious Disease Symposium). Our Delaware contributions are significant: the book features chapters by Board member Dr. Steve Eppes, and Academy members Dr. Rob Abel, Dr. Anand Panwalker, Dr. David Cohen, and Dr. Javed Gilani. We also feature the leadership of several pharmacists led by Nicole Harrington PharmD, from ChristianaCare; the Academy/DPHA's Elizabeth Healy MPH also serves as the book's managing editor. At the 150 year anniversary of APHA, several of us involved in CCDM, participated in a discussion on infectious diseases in the time of COVID-19. The recording can be viewed by [clicking here](#), or the image below.

Control of Communicable Diseases Manual Panel - Tuesday, December 7, 2021



One of the major areas we talked about was human behavior around public health interventions. About the growth and limits of scientific knowledge, and reasons some in the public do not trust the science on vaccinations. And importantly, about engaging communities and individuals in conversations to re-build trust, from where it has been eroded in the past. People go looking for self-reinforcing alternate explanations when mainstream sources let them down. It's up to all of us to build the credibility of institutions today so we retain community trust in the future.

So yes, patients and others ask me about Omicron, as they did about Delta in the past. And assuming I'm not at our local 'Cars & Coffee' and we are discussing the Lancia Omicron*, I generally say the same thing. We have what it takes to interrupt transmission. To all do the right thing by staying safe, through appropriately masking, using hand hygiene, and getting vaccinated/boosted. To diverge from this is the true issue- the *variance of concern*.

May your holidays be safe and bright, may your Italian car's electrics always work, and may you stay happy and healthy my friends. And may you *always* Drive On!

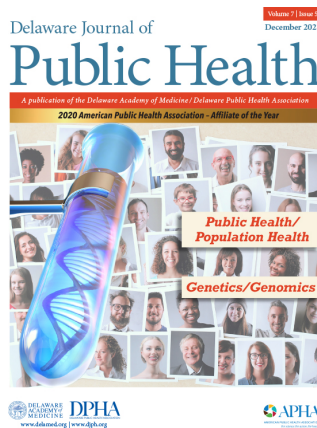


Lancia Omicron Bus in Rome circa 1927 - 1932

By Unknown author - www.tramroma.com, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=43394598>

Delaware Journal of Public Health

Genetics / Genomics



Human biology and genetics is one of the recognized Determinants of Health. It is only recently that we have seen the growth of novel interventions like CRISPR gene editing, gene therapies, and interventions that can act on a biological level.

[Read the Issue](#) to learn more about newborn screening, genetic counseling, the development of cell lines, CRISPR Gene Editing, and more!

We are grateful to Guest Editors Dr. Louis Bartoshesky and Dr. Eric Kmiec for their superb collection of authors and topics.

National Updates

Additional Resources

Delaware Division of Public Health - [The DPH Bulletin](#)

Trust for America's Health: Wellness and Prevention Digest - [Subscribe](#)

Johns Hopkins Infectious Diseases COVID-19 Grand Rounds - [View Schedule](#)

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