
INTRODUCTION

Donna E. Levin

Recognizing the critical need of public health to address discriminatory laws and policies that lead to poor health outcomes for many communities, in October 2018 the Network for Public Health Law (Network) and the American Society of Law, Medicine & Ethics (ASLME), with the generous support of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, organized the National Public Health Law Conference: Health Justice — Empowering Public Health and Advancing Health Equity. The articles in this symposium issue of the *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics* reflect many of the critical issues explored by the authors and discussed with their colleagues in conference workshops and sessions.

The National Conference, which took place in Phoenix, Arizona, provided the opportunity for hundreds of individuals working on the front lines of public health to learn, share, and develop strategies to use law and policy to advance the health of our communities and most vulnerable populations, with health equity as our north star.

The goals of the conference align with those of the Network to build bridges and pathways to health equity by:

- providing practitioners with firsthand knowledge about current local, state, and federal law and policy initiatives to improve public health;
- examining legal approaches and best practices to address priority public health issues;
- sharing helpful resources, tools, and evidence-based research;
- connecting individuals and facilitating partnerships to accomplish public health objectives and foster innovation.

The conference included five workshops: Public Health Law Academy: Train the Trainers; Public Health Law in a Nutshell: Pillars, Policies and Practices; Hands-On Methods Training in Policy Surveillance: A Crash Course in Legal Mapping Techniques and Tools; Cross Sector Data Sharing to Improve Health; and Career Paths in Public Health Law & Policy. Forty concurrent sessions were organized under five tracks: Strengthening Public Health Protections; Public Health Across Sectors; Access to Care and Health Equity; Public Health Law Practice; and Trending Topics. Two plenary sessions and a keynote address allowed leaders in the field to share their insights on the challenges and opportunities for advancing health equity.

In his keynote, “What We Need to Talk About When We Talk About Health,” **Dr. Sandro Galea**, Dean and Robert A. Knox Professor, Boston University School of Public Health, challenged us to consider, given that the U. S. spends more than any other country on doctors and medicine and what to do after we get sick: What if, instead, we focused on the factors that determine our ability to live healthy lives — the social, economic, and environmental conditions around us?

Gene Matthews, Wendy Parmet, and Scott Burris opened the conference with their plenary session,

Donna E. Levin, J.D., is National Director of the Network for Public Health Law, which provides leadership, technical assistance, resources and training in public health law. Before joining the Network, Ms. Levin served for 26 years as General Counsel for the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, where she worked in the areas of newborn screening; genetics and privacy laws; health insurance consumer protections; biotechnology; emergency public health response; public health aspects of health care and health care cost reform; and medical use of marijuana. Ms. Levin received her J.D. from Northeastern University School of Law in Boston, and was a member of the Boston Bar Association's Health Law Steering Committee.

“Public Health Law: Looking Back and Ahead” which explored some of the major themes that have emerged in public health law since the last Public Health Law Conference convened in 2016 including roll-backs of the Affordable Care Act, current and future environmental challenges, the ongoing opioid epidemic, court decisions impacting preemption, commercial speech, reproductive health and tobacco control, and legal issues posed by advances in data technology. This plenary also asked and spoke to the question of what we can do in public health law to address the social determinants that impact health equity as the country grapples with issues of health justice.

The Leaders in Health Justice Plenary, led by **Dr. Umair Shah**, Executive Director, Harris County Pub-

I would like to thank the staff at the Network’s National Office, led by **Ann Phi-Wendt** for their amazing tireless work to organize the conference from beginning to end: **Anna Schmalzbauer, Kayleen Klarich, Sonia Krinke, Sara Rogers, Charles Truong, and Avery Bather.**

I am joined by the conference planning committee and attendees in expressing our deep appreciation to speakers and presenters for bringing us their insights and sharing their knowledge and expertise on so many areas of public health law. Over half of the session presentations at this conference were developed through an abstract submission process. Many, many thanks to the Network Conference Committee and to the Network’s Eastern Region Office, **Megan Griest, Kerry**

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lic Health, included panelists **Bethany A. Johnson-Javois**, Chief Executive Officer, St. Louis Integrated Health Network, **Brian C. Castrucci**, Chief Executive Officer at the de Beaumont Foundation, and **Elizabeth Tobin-Tyler**, Assistant Professor of Family Medicine and Health Services, Policy and Practice, Brown University. These leaders discussed their approaches to health justice, including their experiences and perspectives on access to quality care, segregated communities, the role of government and the private sector and the need for effective legal and policy intervention, as well as how public health needs to evolve to address the structural underpinnings and systemic inequities that create barriers to good health for so many Americans.

The manuscripts in this symposium issue examine many of the critical subjects covered in workshops and sessions at the conference, for example: *Civil Rights Law and the Determinants of Health: How Some States Have Utilized Civil Rights Laws to Increase Protections Against Discrimination*; *Legal and Policy Responses to Vaccine-Preventable Disease Outbreaks*; *Health Equity, School Discipline Reform and Restorative Justice*; *A Public Health Approach to Gun Violence, Legally Speaking*; *Opioid-Related Legislation in Kentucky and West Virginia: Assessing Policy Impact*; and *Healthy Spaces: Legal Tools, Innovations, and Partnerships*.

McGowan Lowrey, and Director **Kathleen Hoke**; as well as Network consultant **Priscilla Fox**, and Network and volunteer peer reviewers, for their efforts which made that process a great success.

Thanks as well go to all the moderators and conveners of workshops and concurrent sessions for helping to make this such an outstanding and valuable convening: **Julie Ralston Aoki**, Director, Healthy Eating & Active Living Programs, Public Health Law Center; **Leila Barraza**, Consultant, Network for Public Health Law – Western Region Office, Assistant Professor, Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health, University of Arizona; **Brittney Crock Bauerly**, Staff Attorney, Network for Public Health Law – Northern Region Office; **Georges Benjamin**, Executive Director, American Public Health Association; **Micah L. Berman**, Associate Professor of Public Health and Law, Health Services Management & Policy, The Ohio State University College of Public Health & Moritz College of Law; **Jennifer Bernstein**, Deputy Director, Network for Public Health Law – Mid-States Region Office; **Colleen Healy Boufides**, Senior Attorney, Network for Public Health Law – Mid-States Region Office; **Rita-Marie Brady**, General Attorney, HHS Office of the General Counsel, CDC; **Scott Burris**, Professor of Law and Public Health, Director, Center for Public Health Law Research, Temple University; **Derek Carr**, Staff Attorney, ChangeLab

Solutions; **Corey Davis**, Deputy Director, Network for Public Health Law – Southeastern Region Office; **Cesar De La Vega**, Policy Analyst, ChangeLab Solutions; **Peter Eckart**, Program Director, Data Across Sectors for Health, Illinois Public Health Institute; **Brandon Elliot**, Solutions Analyst, Michigan Health Information Network Shared Services; **Trudy Henson**, Public Health Program Director, University of Maryland Center for Health and Homeland Security; **Sarah Hexem**, Policy Director, Research & Evaluation Group at Public Health Management Corporation; **Jeff Hild**, Policy Director, Redstone Global Center, George Washington University School of Public Health; **James G. Hodge, Jr.**, Director, Network for Public Health Law – Western Region Office; **Kathleen Hoke**, Director, Network for Public Health Law – Eastern Region Office; **Jill Krueger**, Director, Network for Public Health Law – Northern Region Office; **Kerri McGowan Lowrey**, Deputy Director and Director of Grants and Research, Network for Public Health Law – Eastern Region Office; **Gene Matthews**, Director, Network for Public Health Law – Southeastern Region Office; **Elizabeth McCaman**, Staff Attorney, National Health Law Program; **Angela McGowan**, Project Director, HHS Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion; **Ted Mermin**, Executive Director, Public Good Law Center; **Melissa Moorehead**, Project Manager, Data Across Sectors for Health, Illinois Public Health Institute; **Madeline Morcelle**, Staff Attorney, Mississippi Center for Justice; **Wendy Parmet**, Distinguished Professor of Law, Northeastern University Center for Health Policy and Healthcare Research; **Matthew Penn**, Director, CDC Public Health Law Program; **Dawn Pepin**, Public Health Analyst, CDC Public Health Law Program; **Rocaille Roberts**, Director, Office of Policy & Planning, Harris County Public Health; **Sara Rogers**, Program Coordinator, Network for Public Health Law;

Elisabeth Ryan, Firearms Law and Policy Attorney; **Anna Schmalzbauer**, Senior Program Manager, Network for Public Health Law; **Howard Schneiderman**, Senior Deputy Prosecuting Attorney, King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office; **Jason Smith**, Chair, Assistant Professor, California State University East Bay; **Sarah Somers**, Managing Attorney, Network for Public Health Law – Southeastern Region Office; **Mia Stange**, Program Coordinator, Terra Firma: a program of Montefiore Medical Center and Catholic Charities; **Gregory Sunshine**, Public Health Analyst, CDC Public Health Law Program through Cherokee National Assurance; **Mathew Swinburne**, Associate Director, Network for Public Health Law – Eastern Region Office; **William Tilburg**, Director, Policy and Government Relations, Maryland Medical Cannabis Commission; **Celina Valencia**, Postdoctoral Research Associate, University of Arizona; **Maya Hazarika Watts**, Senior Staff Attorney, ChangeLab Solutions; **Susan Weisman**, Senior Staff Attorney, Public Health Law Center; **Ben Winig**, Vice President, Law & Policy, ChangeLab Solutions; **Leslie Zellers**, Consultant, Public Health Policy & Law.

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