

# POLICY FORUM

## *Out of a Crisis, a Chorus of Hope*

### Introduction

Public health was invented from the scourges of endemic, epidemic, and pandemic infectious diseases years before the world knew of microbes. Our “clinical” thoughts ran more to superstitions and myths, temperaments and humors, and miasmas and mists. Then as now physicians and scientists were mocked for their theories even when they were dead-on right with their recommended practices. Science caught up to explain why they were right.

Public health is being reinvented within the continued scourges of endemic, epidemic, and pandemic diseases not because we don't know of microbes now, but because we literally learn more and more about novel and emerging viruses each day in the course of an unusual case—or millions of cases—of an illness. It's fascinating, or terrifying, or both.

The stories told in this issue of the journal are happening in real time and evolving. Our editorial staff had to change dates, add events, and keep data up to date as we approached publication, so fast has the pandemic continued to surge and fall, like the tides or like angry surf battering our cities, towns, and isolated hamlets.

Read about the innovations.

Listen closely to the storytellers.

They are thoughtful, ingenious, driven, solution-focused, out front, in danger—inde fatigable. They use engineering, social science, the humanities, microbiology, information technology, biochemistry, social media, face-to-face conversation, and professional skills to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and the inequities it has further highlighted. They are largely people we might not think of as health care professionals, but out there on the front line, at ground zero, they sure as heck are to the men, women, and children in need of help, battered by the clinical, social, and economic terrors and woes of this pandemic.

I couldn't find a single word of despair in these pages, only a chorus of hope. NCMJ

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