

# PUBLIC HEALTH HAPPENINGS

## Special Edition, September 2018

### **Hurricane Maria – 365 days and Counting: A Community Forum**

Accounting for the immediate damage of this Category 5 storm, \$91 billion in monetary damages, and perhaps 3,000 deaths, does not adequately capture Hurricane Maria's enduring impact on the security, economic status, social relations, physical and mental health, and general well-being of those who were in its path. Join us on September 20<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 pm in the Keller Auditorium, UCONN Health when we will examine one aspect of this disaster – the challenges of meeting the immediate and ongoing needs of some 3,000 adults and children who have sought refuge here in Connecticut.

### **We are now The Program in Applied Public Health Sciences**

Interest in the study of population and public health has grown exponentially in recent years, as the public has gained greater understanding of the extent to which health, well-being, illness and disability are socially determined and the positive impact of public health action has grown more apparent. The mission of our accredited MPH degree “to provide an exemplary academic environment that prepares interprofessional learners to achieve high standards of public health practice” prioritizes scholarship across disciplines and the importance of putting theory into action.<sup>1</sup> These complementary perspectives are reflected in the makeup of our student body, faculty research interests, course offerings and opportunities for engagement across the community.

Here at UCONN, our academic program enjoys student enrollments and faculty contributions from 10 schools across our university (e.g., Medicine, Dental Medicine, Arts & Sciences, Agriculture, Health & Natural Resources, Nursing, Business, Law, Education, Social Work, Pharmacy); we interact with UCONN undergraduate students through their enrollments in PUBH 1001, PUBH 3001 and our FastTrack BA/BS+MPH option; and we continue to enroll outstanding students in our stand-alone and dual-degree MPH, PhD program and Certificates in Public Health Foundations, Disability Studies and Addiction Science. Our graduate certificate in the Social Determinants of Health and Disparities is unique to Medical education.

To better reflect for prospective students and colleagues the scope of our academic initiatives, we are adopting a more descriptive and inclusive identity. Henceforth, we will be known as

**The Program in Applied Public Health Sciences.** Doing so,

- highlights our commitment to preparing individuals for the practice of public health in NGO, academic and governmental settings.
- acknowledges the inter-sectorial and interprofessional nature of public health in action.
- welcomes the collaborative engagement of entities and stakeholders across our university and community.

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<sup>1</sup> Institute of Medicine, *The Future of the Public's Health in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Washington DC: The National Academies Press, 2002. and Interprofessional Education Collaborative Expert Panel, *Core Competencies for Interprofessional Collaborative Practice: Report of an expert panel*. Washington, D.C.: Interprofessional Education Collaborative, 2011.

- reflects our contributions beyond graduate education to include undergraduate and professional degree programs.
- affords new opportunities to brand and market our curriculum to external audiences.
- distinguishes UCONN among schools and programs across the country by being the first and only program designated in this manner.

Our new identity **does not** change curriculum or requirements of the MPH, PhD or Certificate options. What changes is the way we present ourselves to prospective students and community partners.

## **Faculty News**

We are pleased to announce that Dr. Stacey Brown, Associate Professor of Community Medicine, will be joining our program faculty full-time, with responsibility for our program's practicum and experiential learning options. Dr. Brown is well-known to the population health community of Connecticut as she has served many years as Director of the Community Based Education portion of our medical school. She is a welcome addition to our program's primary faculty.

We also welcome Fawatih Mohamed-Abouh, MD, MPH and Marco Palmeri, MPH, RS to our instructional core. Fawatih and Marco are long-time associates of our program as students, teaching assistants and now instructors of PUBH 5403 Health Administration and PUBH 5404 Environmental Health.

We congratulate Dr. Bonnie McRee who was recently awarded CDC funding for her program "implementing Alcohol Screening and Brief Intervention in Healthcare Systems Providing Women's Health Services." Dr. McRee's project will develop a system-level, sustainable screening and brief intervention service within the Planned Parenthood of Southern New England (PPSHE) health system that will enhance PPSNE's ability to address risky alcohol use in their patients.

We also congratulate Dr. Chia-Ling Kuo who received an NIH/NIA award for her study "Understanding the role of ApoE2 in longevity and age-related diseases and conditions using 500,000 UK Biobank participants." Dr. Kuo's project will investigate the roles of genetic and environmental factors, such as physical activity and biomarkers, in the relationships between ApoE2 and age-related health outcomes for potential interventions. ApoE2 is associated with reduced dementia incidence and longevity, but is also linked to adverse health outcomes. This study will use the UK Biobank data, which features a very large sample size (500,000 participants) and rich genetic and phenotypic data.

## **Contact us!**

Our program is adopting a new central phone number, **860-679-5470**. You can still reach the program director directly at 860-679-5480 ([gregorio@uchc.edu](mailto:gregorio@uchc.edu)) or Barbara Case at 860-679-1503 ([bcase@uchc.edu](mailto:bcase@uchc.edu)). You can visit our program website at: <https://health.uconn.edu/community-medicine/m-p-h-program/> or the Department of Community Medicine at: <https://health.uconn.edu/community-medicine/>.

## **And finally,**

After many years, Morgan Spencer is assuming new responsibilities within the Department of Community Medicine and will no longer be supporting our program efforts. We appreciate her contributions, and wish her well in future endeavors.