2023 ALPHA PUBLIC HEALTH EXECUTIVE & ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTS CONFERENCE
WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 22
COLLECTED PRESENTATIONS

1. How to Have the Hard Conversations – Paul Sharma, Director, Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention, Region of Peel – Public Health
2. About alPHa – Loretta Ryan, Executive Director, alPHa
3. What is Public Health? – Alexander Summers, Medical Officer of Health, Middlesex-London Health Unit
4. Communication Tips – Jon Begg, Public Affairs & Communications Specialist, Northwestern Health Unit
5. Workplace Health and Wellness – Franger Jimenez, Workplace Wellness and Health Promotion student, Centennial College.
alPHa 2023 Executive/ Administrative Assistants Conference

How to have the hard conversations

Paul Sharma
Director, Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention
Region of Peel - Public Health
February 22, 2023
Building and Managing Relationships

Three alliances in the workforce:

- Public Health
- Medical Officer of Health
- Stakeholders (e.g. Board of Health, community)
Considerations

- Pandemic impacts
- Virtual workplace
- Diversity, equity and inclusion
- Right to Disconnect
- Others?
Strategies - Your People Leader

1. Explain the situation and context
2. Be honest and truthful
3. Ask for their perspective
4. Aim for a resolution/next steps
5. Thank them for listening and time
Strategies - With Others

Some back pocket tactics can include:

- Partnership
- Listen
- Trust
- Open and direct
- Set parameters
- Keep emotions out
- Thank you
### Scenario

1. We have a new board chair who is somewhat abrasive in his communications. I take the high road and just answer his questions and ignore the tone; however, it is difficult to allow people to be rude to you. He is nice in person, so it could just be that his written correspondence is poor and has unintended tones.

**Question:**

How does one cope with board members who don’t cross any lines per se, but treat you in a way that would not be acceptable if they were a co-worker?
Discussion - From Submissions

Scenario

2. Question
How do you have difficult conversations in regards to change management (a new executive, restructuring)
Discussion - From Submissions

Scenario

3. When you have the correct information / process (i.e., it’s legislated) and your superior does not and intends to move forward based on their own idea of how it should go, versus how it legally needs to go.

Question

How do you approach that in the best interest of the organization? Lots of fear of retaliation in situations like this from leaders with egos / unwillingness to be wrong.
Association of Local Public Health Agencies

February 22, 2023
Established in 1986, the Association of Local Public Health Units (alPHa) is the non-profit organization that provides leadership to Ontario’s public health units and their boards of health.

alPHa is the Voice of Ontario's Public Health System
Membership is open to all Ontario public health units and their boards of health.

alPHa represents the interests of all of Ontario’s 34 boards of health, medical officers and associate medical officers of health, and senior public health managers.
Affiliate Groups

**AOPHBA** = Association of Ontario Public Health Business Administrators

**APHEO** = Association of Public Health Epidemiologists in Ontario

**ASPHIO** = Association of Supervisors of Public Health Inspectors of Ontario

**HPO** = Health Promotion Ontario

**OAPHD** = Ontario Association of Public Health Dentistry

**OPHNL** = Ontario Association of Public Health Nursing Leaders

**ODPH** = Ontario Dietitians in Public Health
alPHa – How We Do it

Advocacy

Communications

Education

Representation
Public Health Leaders

Public Health Matters

Supporting Ontario’s local public health units and their boards of health to achieve a strong and effective public health system across all communities
Strategic Partnerships

Ministry of Health
Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health
Public Health Ontario
Ontario Health
alPHa Affiliate Organizations (7)
Association of Municipalities of Ontario
Ontario Medical Association
Ontario Public Health Association
Dalla Lana School of Public Health
alPHa Board

alPHa is a governance board with 21 Directors.

7 Board of Health Members - *Board of Health Section*
7 Medical Officers of Health - *Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health*
7 Affiliate Representatives - *Affiliates*
1 Associate Representative - *OPHA*

alPHa Board meets 5 to 6 times per year.
alPHa Executive Committee meets once a month.
BOH Executive Committee meets every other month and communicates frequently.

Updates from the Board are by email, website and newsletter. (*Information Break*)
Key Resources

Foundational Documents
- alPHa Constitution
- Strategic Plan
- Annual Report
- alPHa Resolutions
- Directors Policies and Procedures
  - BOH Shared Resources Page
- BOH Orientation Manual & BOH Governance Toolkit

alPHa Correspondence
Correspondence Home Page

Communications
- Information Break
- Board Packages and emails
- Regional Representatives
  - alPHa Staff
- Twitter @PHAgencies
alPHa Staff
NOT ALL SUPERHEROES WEAR CAPES!
Questions
What is Public Health?
alPHa
Dr. Alex Summers
February 2023
Before we begin, what do you think public health is?
Depends on who you ask!

• The general public?
• Most healthcare workers?
• The government?
“Public health refers to all organized measures to prevent disease, promote health, and prolong life among the population as a whole. Its activities aim to provide conditions in which people can be healthy and focus on entire populations, not on individual patients or diseases.”

World Health Organization
“Public health is one of the efforts organized by society to protect, promote and restore the people’s health.”

John M. Last
Public health is a field for enquiry and an arena for action

Adapted: Frank and Di Ruggiero
Why do people get sick?
What makes people healthy?
“The public health systems and tools developed by different societies are determined by the health issues of the day, as well as the level of economic development, knowledge and techniques and the relationships of power between its social groups.”

Rutty, C and Sullivan, S.
Ancient Greece

• Greek historian Thucydides wrote of a lethal contagious disease that affected the Athenians while the city was under siege from the Spartans
• Symptoms included fever, painful skin rash, and great thirst. Many died.
• Theories on the origins of the disease were varied

Ancient Greek hypotheses

- Imported from Africa
- Secondary to starvation and the strife of war
- The Spartans poisoned the wells
- Divine punishment for unrevealed sins

The Black Death

• Bubonic plague caused by *Yersinia pestis*, a bacteria that infects fleas
• Terrorized Europe in 14th century
• One quarter to one third of the population of Europe is thought to have died in the first wave of plague
Quarantine

- From the French *quarante*, meaning forty (days)
- Traced to the town of Ragusa (now Dubrovnik) in 1377
- Ships were required to wait forty days before unloading cargo or releasing passengers
The ‘real’ John Snow
Cholera in Britain

- Cholera epidemic erupted in London, UK in 1848, and then again in 1853
- Many attributed it to ‘miasma’ but Snow thought it was attributable to a self-replicating agent which was excreted in the cholera evacuations and inadvertently ingested through water
The Broad Street Pump

- Snow compared cholera mortality rates in populations of south London supplied by water drawn from sewage-contaminated vs uncontaminated regions of the Thames River.
- In 1854, while performing his study, an outbreak of cholera struck SoHo, resulting in 550 deaths in 2 weeks.
The Broad Street Pump

- Snow concluded the water from a pump on Broad Street was responsible.
- He convinced local council to remove the handle of the pump on September 8th, 1854.
Our theories of disease influence our actions
What are our theories today?
Determinants of Health

- Gender
- Biology and Genetic Endowment
- Personal Health Practices and Coping Skills
- Culture
- Income and Social Status
- Social Support Networks
- Education and Literacy
- Employment/Working Conditions
- Social Environments
- Healthy Child Development
- Physical Environments
- Health Services

Relative Impacts of Determinants of Health

WHAT MAKES CANADIANS SICK?

50% YOUR LIFE
- Income
- Early childhood development
- Disability
- Education
- Social exclusion
- Social safety net
- Gender
- Employment/working conditions
- Race
- Aboriginal status
- Safe and nutritious food
- Housing/homelessness
- Community belonging

25% YOUR HEALTH CARE
- Access to health care
- Health care system
- Wait times

15% YOUR BIOLOGY
- Biology
- Genetics

10% YOUR ENVIRONMENT
- Air quality
- Civic infrastructure

These are Canada’s social determinants of health #SDOH
Our theories of disease distribution also influences our actions
Why are some people sick and others are healthy?
Health Inequality

“Health inequalities can be defined as differences in health status or in the distribution of health determinants between different population groups.”

World Health Organization
Health Inequity

• Variations or differences in health that are:
  • systematic,
  • socially produced (and therefore **modifiable**)
  • unjust
Our theories of disease and disease distribution influence our actions.
Alex has a heart attack.

WHY?

Unequal distribution of wealth, particularly for equity-deserving groups

WHY?

Intergenerational poverty and limited access to education

WHY?

Working multiple jobs with little ‘free’ time

WHY?

Lack of exercise and unhealthy diet

WHY?

High blood pressure and high cholesterol

WHY?

Alex has a heart attack
Given our current theories, what does public health do?
Alex has a heart attack
High blood pressure and high cholesterol
Lack of exercise and unhealthy diet
Working multiple jobs with little ‘free’ time
Intergenerational poverty and limited access to education
Unequal distribution of wealth, particularly for equity-deserving groups

WHY?
WHY?
WHY?
WHY?
WHY?
Principles of Local Public Health Work

• The work of a local Public Health agency:
  • Protects and promotes the health of the community;
  • Is grounded in a population health approach with a population-level impact on health;
  • Is equity-oriented; and
  • Is preventive and aims to work as upstream as possible.

• Public health action is unified by its focus on prevention, upstream interventions, and societal factors that influence health.
  • Public health aims to prevent people from getting sick in the first place.
Public Health vs. Public Health Care

• The health care system and the public health system intersect but are distinct.
• Whereas the health care system is focused on caring for patients and treating diseases, the public health system is focused on prevention and the community as a whole.
## Example - Smoking and Tobacco Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>UPSTREAM</th>
<th>MIDSTREAM</th>
<th>DOWNSTREAM</th>
<th>AT SEA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The causes of the causes of disease</td>
<td>The causes of the causes of disease</td>
<td>The causes of disease</td>
<td>The disease</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Prevention</th>
<th>Primordial</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Tertiary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Support a poverty reduction strategy to reduce smoking rates</th>
<th>Work with partners to implement by-laws to limit tobacco use &amp; second-hand smoke exposure</th>
<th>Address immediate health needs through NRT replacement therapy &amp; smoking cessation programs</th>
<th>Treatment of illness and disease caused by tobacco use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Role | Public Health | Public Health | Public Health/Health Care | Health Care |
Core functions of Public Health

- Assessment and surveillance
- Health promotion and policy development
- Health protection
- Disease prevention
- Emergency management
The Public Health System in Canada

Federal
- Public Health Agency of Canada
- First Nations-Inuit Health Branch, Health Canada

Provincial
- Ministry of Health, Chief Medical Officer of Health
- Public Health Ontario

Municipal
- Local Public Health Agencies
Provincial Legislation and Mandate

- Provinces and territories have the mandate to protect the health of population and deliver public health services.
- Public health services in each jurisdiction governed by public health act (or equivalent) and regulations, and by other relevant legislation.
- In Ontario, that legislation is the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, which outlines the following:
  - Jurisdictional boundaries
  - Governance and structure of Board of Health
  - Mandatory programs and services
  - Roles and powers of Medical Officer of Health
Local Public Health Units

• A *health unit* is the area of jurisdiction of a board of health.

• There are three types of boards of health: autonomous, regional, single tier/semi-autonomous.

• Public health programs and services are delivered by 34 local public health agencies, often called ‘health units,’ which are governed by the boards of health.
What are the Ontario Public Health Standards?

- Boards of health are accountable for implementing the OPHS including the referenced protocols and guidelines.

- The Standards:
  - Identify the minimum expectations for public health programs and services to be delivered by boards of health.
  - Define broadly the work that public health does, and outlines accountability and reporting mechanisms.
  - Are published by the Minister of Health as per the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*. 

*ML*
*BUREAU DE SANTÉ DE MIDDLESEX-LONDON HEALTH UNIT*

www.healthunit.com
Foundational Standards

- Population Health Assessment
- Health Equity
- Effective Public Health Practice
- Emergency Management
Program Standards

• Chronic Disease Prevention and Well-Being
• Food Safety
• Healthy Environments
• Healthy Growth and Development
• Immunization
• Infectious and Communicable Diseases Prevention and Control
• Safe Water
• School Health
• Substance Use and Injury Prevention
Public Health vs. public health

• Infinite scope; finite resources, mandate and expertise.
• Many things can be a ‘public health issue’ but ‘Public Health’ may not be responsible, nor have the expertise, to lead the response to all issues.
  • Ex. Housing and homelessness, climate change.
• This does not mean we don’t play a role!
The work of Public Health is diverse!

• Individual clinical service delivery
• Education
• Inspection
• Surveillance
• Policy development
• And more!
That is Public Health!
COMMUNICATION TIPS

• Plain language
• Dealing with angry residents
• Brief glimpse into the world of conspiracy theory believers

Jon Begg
Public Affairs & Communications Specialist
Northwestern Health Unit
Incorporating plain language
(I mean ‘using’ plain language)
Why use a **BIG** word when a **diminutive** one will do?
“The purpose of a plain-language approach in written communication is to convey information easily and unambiguously. It should not be confused with an oversimplified, condescending style. Rather, by choosing straightforward vocabulary and sentence structures and by organizing and presenting your material clearly and logically, you can save the reader time and effort and ensure that your message will be clearly understood.”
“Plain language is a way of organizing and presenting information so that it makes sense to most people. Health information written in plain language helps you get your message across to the greatest number of people.”
Plain language
Why do we care?

Statistics Canada

42% some degree of difficulty with everyday reading tasks

43% difficulty reading maps, job applications and tables

45% low literacy skills
advance planning ...................... planning
after this is accomplished .......... then
at an early date ...................... soon
facilitate ........................... help, make possible
in the absence of .................... without
It would be appropriate for me to begin by saying that .......... First
Creating a structure for your message

Writing using plain language
Start with the main message
Start each page with the most important idea, step or information.

Add details and tasks by order of importance. Keep all task-related content in the centre of the page. Use links strategically to direct people to necessary information and tasks.

Include information for people who want to learn more or have an advanced knowledge of the topic or service.

Add related links to content (such as laws or publications) that support the task on the page.
Letters may need a sympathetic opening

- Research shows that the tone of a letter does affect how readable it is.

Next, use an overview sentence

- One sentence that acts as a kind of table of contents.
Focus on the reader by using active voice AND use *we* instead of *you*.
Accusatory use of **you**  Better tone using **we**

**You were not very clear.**  **We did not understand your message.**

**You did not send documentation.**  **We did not receive your documentation.**

Example of passive and active sentences

**Passive:** You may be asked to provide proof of citizenship.

**Active:** We may ask you to provide proof of citizenship.
Dealing with angry clients
• Making the customer feel heard and understood is key to diffusing their anger.
• Be sympathetic, patient, and try to fix the problem.
• Ask questions to deescalate difficult situations.
• Do not react. Keeping calm is key
• Angry phone calls aren’t personal
• Let the person talk
• Be patient
• Do not argue
• Let the caller feel ‘heard’
Use A Script

• Better chance of saying the right thing
• A few phrases or bullet points
• Be prepared
• Don’t judge
• Promise to attempt a solution
Dealing with escalating anger

• Ask questions to calm the caller down
• Document your interaction
• Take time to unwind
• Don’t let upset or angry patients drain your energy and ruin your entire day

Other professionals suggest...

• not the time argue
Other professionals suggest...

Listening phrases

Let the “patient” know that you are focused on what they have to tell you.

• Tell me more.
• I understand.
• Please continue.
• I would really like to hear your thoughts.
• Is there anything else you would like me to know?
Other professionals suggest...

Acknowledging phrases

Let the patient know that you heard and clearly understand their concerns.

- What I’m hearing is . . .
- I appreciate you sharing this with me.
- I can see how much this has upset you.
- That’s a difficult situation to be in.
- That’s upsetting to hear.
- I’m sorry you’re going through this.
Other professionals suggest... 

Ending or transition phrases 
Help move the conversation to a conclusion. 

• So sorry to interrupt, but I want to make sure I understand everything before it’s time to go. 
• I’m grateful for your feedback. But it may take some time to resolve your situation. Can I get back to you? 
• I’ve never thought about it that way. Let me talk to our MOH to see what they think. 
• I may not be the best person to address your concerns. But I can find out who is.
THE US CREATED THE VIRUS

CORONAVIRUS IS A TOOL TO INTRODUCE TYRANNY

SCHENGEN HAS COLLAPSED

CORONAVIRUS IS THE CHERNOBYL OF THE EU

THE VIRUS IS NOT DANGEROUS

DISINFORMATION
How to talk to conspiracy theorists

Pew Research Center survey of US adults found that 36% thought these conspiracy theories were probably or definitely true:

- The theories contain a kernel of truth
- Respect, compassion, and empathy
- Some people don’t want to change
Why Do Some People Believe in Conspiracy Theories?

- Painful and uncertain times
- Personality traits and characteristics*:
  - paranoid or suspicious thinking
  - eccentricity
  - low trust in others
  - stronger need to feel special
  - belief in the world as a dangerous place
  - seeing meaningful patterns where none exist

*Psychological Predictors of Belief in Conspiracy Theories – Joshua Hart and Molly Graether
Thank you.
Workplace Health and Wellness Month
100% Healthier choices!
Health

“A state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease” (WHO, 1986)
# Mental health tips!

- Time management
- The right amount of sleep hours
- Exercise
- Hobbies
- Meditation
- Connect with your close ones
- Enjoy the little things and celebrate accomplishments
2023 alPHA Workplace Health & Wellness Month

alPHA members are encouraged to engage in physical activity (e.g. walking, hiking, swimming, biking, paddling) or activities that promote mental health (e.g. meditation, yoga, relaxation exercises, fun team building) for at least 30 minutes per day during the month of May.

Good health involves good eating habits. Do you have a recipe that contributes to health and wellness? We love to hear about these too!

Participate and share on Twitter. Don’t forget to include in your tweet: a picture, @PHAgencies and the hashtag #PublicHealthLeaders. We’ll profile your Fitness Challenge activities at the alPHA Conference that is taking place June 13, 2023.

HERE’S HOW TO PARTICIPATE

Activities are to be completed at any time during the month of May. Any physical or mental health activities of a 30-minute duration are encouraged.

Post your healthy recipes too.
Be creative and have fun!

Post your tweets with pictures or links and include:
@PHAgencies and #PublicHealthLeaders
Ready, Set, GO!

Easy Activity Tips!

At Home - Work in the garden or mow the grass. Using a riding mower doesn’t count! Rake leaves, prune, and dig. Go out for a short walk before breakfast, after dinner or both! Why not start the day off with meditation? Start with 5-10 minutes and work up to 30 minutes.

At Work - Many of us have sedentary jobs. If you can, use active transportation to get to and from your workplace. Go for a walk at lunchtime. Incorporate these activities into your work day. Start with short walks and work up to longer trips. Practice mindfulness. Engage in fun team building exercises.

At Play - Play and recreation are important for good health. Look for opportunities to be active and have fun at the same time: Plan activities that include physical activity (hiking, backpacking, swimming, etc.). Do your favorite physical activities and regularly go walking, jogging, bicycling or wheeling. Start with achievable goals and work your way up to regular exercise routines.

At any Time - Prepare a healthy snack or meal, take a picture, and share it with the recipe.
Workplace Health and Wellness Month
AND THE **WINNER** IS...
Congrats!
Thank you for your time and attention!