From our TPHA president, Dr. Raouf Arafat:

Public health professionals, especially in our State, who work tirelessly every day to protect the health of all people and all communities are the real Heroes of the State. I know these have been tiring times and that you all, no matter what capacity or role you work in under the umbrella of Public Health, your community's health and well-being has been and will continue to be your focus, passion, and priority.

Public health professionals are dedicated not only to tracking this current pandemic, but all other threats to our health. Investigating food-borne outbreaks, working to reduce infant mortality, developing and distributing vaccines, preparing us for natural disasters and responding to disasters are still essential functions. Our public health professionals do all this and so much more to protect and improve the population’s health. Their work, YOUR work, affects the lives of Texans in countless ways. Thank you to our Heroes.

I would like to thank all of our colleagues who are on the front lines of public health and healthcare for their commitment and dedication during this tough time. Now, there is a light at the end of the tunnel with an effective COVID-19 vaccine; a turning point in the pandemic. Public health and healthcare professionals will carry the load as usual and will deliver the vaccine to members of our communities in an efficient and effective way as they have done over the years.

Because your efforts deserve to be celebrated, we, at the Texas Public Health Association, decided to have a virtual mini-conference on November 20th to celebrate you! Several TPHA Board members felt strongly that we need to communicate our appreciation to you. On behalf of the Texas Public Health Association, we wanted to celebrate and thank you for your tireless commitment to the public’s health during this unprecedented global pandemic.

We celebrate the incredible diversity of specialties within the Public Health realm and of our professionals. I dream that one day we will celebrate together when health will be a primary consideration in all public policies. Until that day comes, the Texas Public Health Association is grateful to all who joined us to celebrate the work you do.

We invited various public health professionals from our communities in Texas to spotlight just a bit of the incredible Public Health work happening out there. Our agenda for the mini-conference was relatively short, but was full of exciting videos, speakers, and was meant to be a true celebration of our workforce across Texas. We introduced “Celebrate Public Health Videos” made by TPHA members followed by our selected featured video speaker Tim St. Peter from Williamson County, and then we heard from Dr. Eduardo Sanchez, a great motivator and speaker and The Chief Medical Officer for Prevention from the American Heart Association and the Former Health Commissioner for the State of Texas. Dr. Sanchez motivated the troops and shared his opinions on improving public health moving forward and advised us all to move together to be able to go far!

We will continue celebrating your great efforts during our annual educational virtual conference during the period 17-19 May 2021. I encourage you to register for the conference and participate with a presentation or a poster. We plan to have great speakers for you.

Let us celebrate our public health success together as a family. Looking forward to seeing y’all in May!
From our TPHA Executive Director, Terri Pali:

**Welcome to our Newest TPHA Members!**

We are so glad you chose TPHA as your professional association!

Please take a couple of minutes to browse our website and see what we have to offer you. We offer this newsletter as a method of networking with your fellow TPHA members. We have a quarterly peer-reviewed, indexed journal for professional development, and many public health-oriented groups we align with.

Our strength is our membership and the diversity among our members. Member diversity spans race/ethnicity, levels of experience, and disciplines of expertise. Again, welcome and please contact Terri at txpha@aol.com with any questions or comments.

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**Volunteer Opportunity!**

**Call for Policy and Advocacy Committee Chair**

The Texas Public Health Association is seeking a member to serve as the Policy and Advocacy Committee Chair. The position is appointed by the President and approved by Executive Board in absence of Governing Council.

The Committee on Policy & Advocacy duties shall include, but not be limited to: actively solicit ideas and proposed resolutions from the membership, policy statements from the Governing Council, and maintain records of resolutions and policy statements in order to assist the governing bodies of the Association in determining the policies of the Association.
Additional duties include coordinating legislative functions for the Annual Conference; tracking legislation that may impact TPHA and public health; tracking policy issues and developments; liaison with other public health and local policy committees and groups; development of government affairs plan; policy forum planning; provide information to TPHA members on impending policy issues and recommending policy direction to Governing Council; monitoring State and national policy events and developments; educating elected officials and the public on matters of public health interest; and building coalitions with other health-related organizations. Other duties shall include making recommendations to the Governing Council concerning proposed resolutions and policy statements.

If policy and advocacy for public health issues is an area of interest for you and you are willing to serve please send a brief paragraph outlining your qualifications and interest to TPHA at txpha@aol.com Attn: Policy and Advocacy Committee

Texas Public Health Association Public Health Priority Topics/Issues
Member Approved 2020

Current priority topics/issues that were approved by the membership, and in prioritized order are:

1. Public Health Preparedness and Response
2. Public Health System
3. Expansion of Medicaid in Texas
4. Public Health Workforce
5. Chronic Disease
6. Preventing Gun violence
7. Opioid Abuse Surveillance and Prevention
8. Sexual Violence and Human Trafficking
9. Texas Health Literacy
10. Routine Vaccinations Against Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

TPHA AWARDS

Be sure to include the nomination of someone for a TPHA Award, in your New Year’s Resolution list! Awards include the James E. Peavy Memorial, TPHA Honorary Life Member, Legislative Excellence, Dr. Ron J. Anderson Thinking Progressively for Health; and Public Health Award for Media Excellence Award. To learn more go to: https://www.texaspha.org/page/Awards

CALL for TPHA MEMBER PARTICIPATION!

The TPHA leaders are proposing a Governing Council Position Statement advocating for increased public health funding and infrastructure improvements. We are calling on our members to help us! Send us one 2-4 sentence paragraph describing the need you see for your agency to best serve the public’s health in your community. Please send to tphajournal@gmail.com. All submitted materials will be reviewed and considered, however, not all submissions will be included in the final statement. Once we have a draft Position Statement TPHA Governing Council members will review and vote on it. The final version will be published in the Texas Public Health Journal. Our goal is to include this position statement in the spring 2021 Texas Public Health Journal. This issue is also our annual tribute to public health during National Public Health Week. Please join us to bring YOUR voice a place in our indexed quarterly publication. Please send us your short paragraph by January 15, 2021.
News from TPHA Boards, Committees and Sections

TPHA Editorial Board News:

The TPHA Editorial Board met on November 19, 2020. Here are some of the highlights that were discussed at that meeting:

- **Publication of TPHA Education Conference Abstracts:**
  Since many, if not the majority, of meeting abstracts are not subsequently published as journal articles, access to these abstracts is important for researchers. In the past, TPHA Education Conference abstracts for some conferences, but not all, were published as electronic Texas Public Health Journal (TPHJ) supplemental issues. The board decided to review the past five years and to retrospectively publish conference abstracts for the conferences that were not published. Since the conference for 2020 was cancelled due to COVID-19, there will be no publication for that year. The board agreed to publish abstracts for future meetings as an electronic TPHJ supplemental issue.

- **Database Reviews:**
  In addition to the public health commentaries and public health-related book reviews that are routinely published in the TPHJ, the editorial board approved a new category to be added to the list of articles we will consider for publication. Publicly available databases are being used more and more. It is of utmost importance that researchers know of the availability of these databases and know the strengths and weaknesses of each. As a way to bring this important publication potential to the attention of our members and journal subscribers, our TPHA Editorial Board Chair, Mathias Forrester will submit the first such review. He will describe the **Vaccine**

- The Winter 2021 TPHJ Issue:

Have questions about any of our publication opportunities or need some guidance to get started? Contact us and ask! Email Catherine Cooksley, DrPH, CPH at tphajournal@gmail.com. Please see the announcement below for more information. We look forward to hearing from you soon!

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**TPHA**
**TEXAS PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION**

**Texas Public Health Journal (TPHJ)**

Members and non-members are invited to submit:

- Public Health Practice Commentaries
- Brief Reports
- Public Health Book or Software Reviews
- Database Reviews
- Historical Public Health Short Papers
- Original Public Health Research Manuscripts*
- Original Public Health Practice Manuscripts*

*These are externally peer-reviewed by field-specific experts. Other articles are internally peer-reviewed by our editorial board. There is no charge for submission or publication when guidelines are followed.

[https://www.texaspha.org/page/Journal](https://www.texaspha.org/page/Journal)

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**TPHA Committee Reports**

We look forward to hearing about the important work of our committees in the next issue of the Newsletter.
TPHA Vision Care Section

The TPHA Vision Care Section is offering a members-only (must be current on TPHA membership) continuing education webinar on December 9th from 7:00-9:00 pm.

Submitted by Sima Mozdar, OD, Vision Care Section Chair-Elect

Topics and speakers include:

- **Part I: Choroidal Folds: Management in Optometric Setting**, Dr. Yelena Smart  
  Dr. Yelena Smart is a New York City native who obtained her undergraduate degree summa cum laude from CUNY Brooklyn College. She went on to graduate at the top of her class from SUNY College of Optometry in Manhattan. She completed her residency at the NJ VA with emphasis on ocular disease and primary eye care. She has been an attending physician at two of the outpatient clinics of the New Jersey VA for the past 5 years and an adjunct professor with SUNY College of Optometry and Salus University. She resides in Monmouth County, NJ with her husband and two children.

- **Part II: Scleritis**, Dr. Nicole Riese  
  Dr. Nicole Riese received her undergraduate degree from the University of Virginia’s McIntire School of Commerce and subsequently completed optometry school at Indiana University School of Optometry. She then completed a primary care residency at the Michael E. DeBakey VA in Houston, TX. She worked at the Beaumont, Texas VA (a community-based outpatient clinic of Houston) then transferred to the New Jersey VA system in 2018. She is originally from New Jersey and has been enjoying living closer to friends and family.

For more information and to register go to: [https://www.texaspha.org/events/register.aspx?id=1452349](https://www.texaspha.org/events/register.aspx?id=1452349)

Submitted by Terri Pali, TPHA’s Executive Director

Dr. Sushma Sharma, member of TPHA’s Aging & Public Health Section and the Director of public and population health research at the DFW Hospital Council (DFWHC) Foundation received the 2020 Mental Health Professional of the Year at the Annual Meeting of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Texas.

Dr. Sushma has been instrumental in coordinating the DFWHC Foundation led North Texas Community Mental Health First Aid program with 40+ organizations including all area health systems and local mental health authorities. The collaborative provides eight-hour public education courses through role-playing and simulations to demonstrate how to offer help and connect persons to the appropriate professional care. The program set a goal of training 10,000 North Texans in the rural counties in three years (2018-2020). To date, collaborative has trained 14,800 north Texans in the program.

“It was a wonderful surprise to receive this award,” said Dr. Sharma. “We are thrilled to be able to conduct this important work and inspire a broad range of people now able to identify the warning signs of mental illness. So many have worked together as a team to deliver this valuable program to the community and I am thankful to have worked with them.”
Submitted by E. Susan Amerian, PhD, Member of TPHA’s Epidemiology Section

We are pleased to announce the availability of a new resource in the greater Houston metro area to assist with the fight against the local COVID-19 epidemic. The COVID-19 Biomedical Expert Panel has been convened by Rice University with support from the Texas Policy Lab to assist policymakers, public health agencies, and government officials with planning their long-term COVID-19 response efforts. This multidisciplinary panel of recognized experts is tasked with providing science-informed responses to critical questions, as well as mitigation recommendations, to officials who seek to make evidence-based decisions during these difficult and unprecedented times. Eligible entities involved in the local COVID-19 response may submit questions via an online submission form (https://socialsciences.rice.edu/covid-19-biomedical-expert-panel) and will be provided information and guidance from the panel free of charge. The panel may be contacted at covidpanel@rice.edu.

Submitted by Wei-Chen Lee, PhD, Member of TPHA’s Community Health Worker Section

Fourth Annual Conference on Migration and Health Call for Abstracts

The University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) invites abstracts for the fourth annual conference on migration and health that will take place virtually from Monday to Friday, March 22-26, 2021. We encourage submissions from undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, and staff that would like to present research focused in the migrant areas. UTMB presents this conference as a platform for wide discussion around four issues:

1. Social, economic and environmental determinants
2. Health care access, quality, and efficiency
3. Migration of health personnel (brain drain)
4. Migrant detention

To learn more about this conference, please visit: https://www.utmb.edu/migrants/home.

All submissions should be completed electronically at: https://www.utmb.edu/migrants/call-for-abstracts by 11:59pm (CST), January 29, 2021. If you have any questions regarding the call for abstracts, contact: Dr. Lee at weilee@tamu.edu or Dr. Serag at haserag@utmb.edu. Thank you.
Submitted by member, Etetor Roland Eshiet of the TPHA Epidemiology Section

Publishing Opportunity, Call for Book Chapters! Exploring the Efficacy and Beneficence of Complementary and Alternative Medicinal Products in Disease Therapy

Recently, public health and healthcare professionals, scientists, and other stakeholders have proffered mitigative approaches to treat symptoms, contain and constrain the scourge of the COVID-19 pandemic. Drugs such as Remdesivir, Hydroxychloroquine, etc., have achieved instant notoriety. Given that the pharmaceutical industry has undertaken pre-clinical and clinical trials on certain known drugs, now seems an excellent opportunity to discuss complementary and alternative medicinal products as well.

Proposals for book chapters for the SEEED-IGI Global book entitled "Exploring the Efficacy and Beneficence of Complementary and Alternative Medicinal Products in Disease Therapy" are being actively sought. Accepted book chapter proposals include: 1) Medicinal Plants for Gout’s Treatment, 2) Medicinal Plants for the Treatment of Type 2 Diabetes, 3) Probiotics, Gut microbiota and Epigenomics: A review of pre-clinical and clinical investigations, 4) Demystifying Black Coffee: No Sugar, No Cream!

For more information please visit https://www.igi-global.com/publish/call-for-papers/call-details/4155 or contact the editor, Etetor Roland Eshiet, at etetoreshiet@yahoo.com, etetor.eshiet@see-ed.com or Tel: +1.713.714.7477.

Submitted by Sarah Tison Malone, MPH, CHW, Member of TPHA’s Health Education Section

Approximately 40 million American adults still smoke, and tobacco use remains the single largest preventable cause of disease and premature death in the county. The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler partnered with the American Cancer Society and held their annual Great American Smokeout event, that focuses on encouraging and offering smokers to start their journey to lead a smoke-free life. Quitting smoking isn’t easy. It takes time. And a plan. You don’t have to stop smoking in one day. Start with day one. One step towards a healthier life and reducing your cancer risk.
Submitted by Catherine D. Cooksley, DrPH, CPH, Member of TPHA’s Epidemiology Section

cdcooksley@gmail.com

I have been mostly retired for several years, but this past summer I was contacted by a recruiter through LinkedIn who was working with the Texas Department of Health and Human Services. I dusted off my investigative skills and contracted through his recruitment agency to work as a state epidemiologist with the amazing crew at my county’s health district. I found it tiring but extremely rewarding to be back doing what I love. I was recently contacted again and I wanted to let my fellow TPHA epidemiologists know of potential contract opportunities across the state.

The Texas DSHS is looking for Epidemiologists and Case Investigators to help with the COVID response across the state. Potential candidates must have a Masters of Public Health with infectious disease experience. The positions are all full-time contract roles with renewal potential. Currently, El Paso has an immediate need for bilingual Epidemiologists. If you would like to be considered for this project, please reach out to Taylor Erickson via phone, 972-729-2596 or email, taericks@maxhealth.com. He will fill you in on the details.

Submitted by Janet Ragland, MBA Highlighting Members of TPHA’s Health Education Section

Dr. Jeffrey L. Levin, senior vice president for Academic Affairs and provost at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler, is retiring after his 32 years of service. A socially distanced, mostly virtual, retirement celebration was held, with only a few selected guests in face masks attending, in keeping with COVID-19 pandemic protocols. Levin built UTHSCT’s Occupational Medicine Department into one of the most respected programs of its kind in the country, promoting the institution as a major source of information on public health and safety. UTHSCT President Kirk A. Calhoun, MD, FACP, announced the Dr. Jeffrey L. Levin Endowed Scholarship to support students studying public health medicine. Dr. Levin’s retirement as a full-time professor and administrator became effective Aug. 15 and the following week he began as a part-time faculty member. His term as Local Health Authority for Smith County expired September 30, 2020.

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Dr. Paul McGaha will serve as the Smith County Health Authority effective Oct. 1, replacing Dr. Jeffrey Levin, who retired September 30 after serving for six years. McGaha is an associate professor and chair of the Department of Community Health at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler (UTHSCT). McGaha has served more than 33 years in public health with a vocational mission to help improve health outcomes in East Texas and to reduce health disparities in the area. He earned his Doctor of Osteopathy medical degree with a specialty in preventive medicine and a Master of Public Health degree. Prior to joining UTHSCT in 2015, McGaha served for 19 years as the regional medical director for Public Health Regions 4 and 5 (North) of the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) in Tyler. From 2012 to 2013, he served as acting assistant commissioner for DSHS.

Thank You to All of Our Members and TPHA Leaders Who Submitted Their News!

We hope you find this TPHA newsletter engaging and informative. Our goals are to keep you updated on the work our leadership team is doing for the association and to allow networking among our members. We look forward to receiving more brief announcements about the work you, our members, are doing and the achievements you have made. TPHA congratulates all members who have received prestigious awards in recognition of the outstanding work they have done.

Please feel free to share this newsletter with your colleagues and encourage them to join us so their important announcements can be shared as well! Check out the newsletter information and tips for posting on our TPHA website at www.texaspha.org/page/journal. Our next newsletter is due out around late February, 2021. Start gathering the information you want to share with the Texas public health community now. We love hearing what y’all are up to!

Thank you for the public health work you do! Please stay safe and healthy during these challenging times! Contact TPHA and let us know how we can help you keep your communities safe and healthy.

A To-Do List to Share

- Wear a Mask Over Your Mouth AND Nose!
- Keep Your Distance – at least 6 feet!
- Clean Your Hands!
- Get a Flu Shot!

Stay Healthy Texas!

Disclaimer: The Editorial Board of the Texas Public Health Association has the right to exclude any materials, including but not limited to those that may jeopardize our non-profit status.