Public Health Labs in a Post-Truth World

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APHL Mission

Shape national and global health outcomes by promoting the value and contribution of public health laboratories and continuously improving the public health laboratory system and practice.

1. Post-Truth
   What is post-truth and what does it have to do with public health labs?

2. Transition
   What has been learned from the transition thus far.

3. Future of PHLs
   What's at stake? Concerns and visions for the future.
Oxford Dictionary: Relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.
Popular Scientific Post-Truths

There’s no evidence to support climate change.

Vaccines cause autism.
Public Mistrust, Post-Truth and the Impact on Science

• We must understand WHY there is mistrust
• Employ effective approaches to get points across
Approaching Post-Truth in a Scientific Manner

Social Psychology  Behavioral Sciences  Cognitive Anthropology  Communication Science

Science Communication
Brainstorming
We surveyed our members

What keeps you up at night?

Risks

Opportunities

Fresh Ideas
Emerging Themes: Risks

- Money and resource challenges
- Workforce challenges
- Perceptions and attitudes
- Legislatures and regulations
- Technological changes
- Private sector competition
- Changing public health landscape
Money and Resources

Perceptions and attitudes

Legislatures and regulations

Workforce challenges

Technological challenges

Private sector competition

Changing PH landscape
Emerging Themes: Opportunities

Responding to Emergencies
Environmental, AMR, infections, opioid epidemic--increases the value of PHLs which could lead to more funding

New Collaborations
With private sector, academia, other labs, government institutions, other public health disciplines

Money and Resources
Increased funding as a result of new emergencies, new collaborations, newer visibility of PHLs

New and Changing Technologies
New diagnostic and testing technologies, information technology: advanced testing, reduced cost

Data
Data analysis from new technologies; leveraging large public health data for the benefit of public health
What keeps you up at night?

**Sustainability**
- Funding (of course)
- Keeping up with science
- Adaptability
- Quality

**Workforce**
- Staffing
- Paying them enough
- Vision
- Leadership
- Succession

**Concern for Privatization**
- Relevance
- Competition
- Is there “epidemic” fatigue?
What Our Members Are Saying

Risks

“Sponsored ambivalence in the public discourse of public health and environmental health science. With the result/intent to undermine the validity of the science that informs on the relationship between warming climate and the extended range of tropical and emerging diseases. – Local PHL (West Coast)"

Opportunities

“It is a good time to engage legislators on the value of public health laboratory testing, particularly with the trend toward personalized medicine and rapid diagnostic testing, which focuses only on the individual. – State PHL"

What Keeps Me Up at Night

“Sustainability. Our states decision-makers do not have an appreciation for public health and all of it's attributes including cost containment through prevention strategies. Therefore, there is a reluctance to identify the necessary funding to support vital public health programs and the agencies that support them (i.e., PHLs) and a desire to consider "privatizing" public health. – State PHL (East Coast)"
Maintaining Our Core Values
Defending science in a post-truth world

A. Use the support of your scientific community

B. Focus on what is working

C. Expose the bad science tactics

D. The work must go on
2017 Membership Survey Results
WHERE ELSE DO APHL MEMBERS BELONG?
WHICH ORGANIZATIONS DO MEMBERS RELY ON MOST FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION?
WHICH ORGANIZATIONS DO MEMBERS RELY ON MOST FOR TECHNICAL AND SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION?
Which organizations do members rely on most for news and updates (federal agency updates, lab news)?
Which organizations do members rely on most for networking?