

The Florida Public Health Review Celebrates A Birthday – Now What?

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A year ago I wrote of the birth of the *Florida Public Health Review (FPHR)*, a joint initiative of the University of South Florida College of Public Health (USF COPH) and the Florida Public Health Association (FPHA). Whereas I had high hopes and expectations about the *FPHR* taking root, this confidence also was accompanied by caution. After all, the *FPHR*'s 17-year-old predecessor, the hard-copy *Florida Journal of Public Health*, had struggled to acquire manuscripts, to maintain a regular publication schedule, and to be financially self-sufficient. Its demise was more a sign of the times than due to any lack of enthusiasm or commitment on the part of editors and others who sought to sustain it. Could the *FPHR* do any better?

Whereas one year's achievement does not guarantee a certain future, I am pleased to report that the *FPHR* exceeded even the most optimistic outlook that I envisioned. The *FPHR* published 15 manuscripts along with scores of abstracts, resulting in 78 pages of text. These articles often featured the combined efforts of persons from the academic and practitioner communities of public health, thereby bridging the notorious gap between research and practice. In 2004, the *FPHR* set out to find the common ground between researcher and practitioner, and to some extent, that commonality was found. Articles also were contributed by students, providing some of tomorrow's public health leaders with a venue to showcase their ideas, as well as with the editorial assistance to hone their writing skills. The *FPHR* also was a source for information about public health conferences in Florida and elsewhere, and offered links to resources of interest to the multifaceted public health community.

How can the *FPHR* be improved? Qualitatively, the peer review process *is* working, even if not with the expeditiousness that I prophesied. It is still my goal to see program notes, research studies, innovations, and other communiqués posted to the *FPHR* while they are of timely relevance. With fresh commitment and spirit, I believe that accomplishing this goal is possible.

The manuscripts that have been submitted to date are from diverse sources and are about timely topics, but presently, they do not represent the range of subjects that adequately reflects the breadth of public health practice. To quote what I wrote a year ago: "...the *FPHR* needs input from every nook and



cranny of the public health community to guarantee its success."

Our inaugural publication year did not produce letters and other correspondence around which an ongoing public health dialogue can be formed. We will try to be a little more provocative on this end

in 2005 to see if we can shake out a few more commentaries from both the academic and workforce communities and fuel the debate about best practices and best processes.

We have not begun to tap the potential of this electronic publication medium. Photos, scanned items, video products, PowerPoint® slides and links to informative Web-based materials are sought to allow us to explore and develop this medium further. Please consider submitting multimedia that are relevant to your other written contributions. It is doubtful that we will run out of space to display them, and moreover, they will enhance readers' understanding.

What lies ahead in 2005? As I compose this piece in March, the beginning of the next hurricane season is less than 90 days away. Who can forget the devastation of the five major storms that crossed our state scarcely six months ago? The public health response to these disasters was phenomenal, and demonstrated that lessons had indeed been learned from the last storm of major proportion, the legendary Hurricane Andrew of August 1992. It is a grand wish of mine that persons in the affected areas and others who came from near and far in 2004 will help to document that initiative in the "pages" of the *FPHR*. These submissions need not be full length articles or major essays, but rather, short testimonials, brief case studies, and succinct descriptions of persons, places, and events that can assist those who will respond to the inevitable storm of this year, next year, or the years beyond. Especially if accompanied by photographs, these contributions will provide lasting images of Florida's public health efforts.

For 2005, the *FPHR* seeks to examine the last 20 to 25 years of public health practice in Florida, noting especially the evolution of the

workforce community. Part of this retrospective will include highlights of the 20 years of the USF COPH's existence, the first accredited public health college in Florida. We also invite contributions from the new schools and colleges of public health (Florida International University and the University of Florida), as well as the emerging public health programs at Florida A&M University, the University of North Florida, and Nova Southeastern University, the longer existing program of the University of Miami, the Department of Health with its arms in Florida's 67 counties, and other groups and organizations with missions that serve the public's health. Essays, profiles, and recollections of individuals who made and *are making* a difference will help tell Florida's story. Please help us construct this historiography with words and pictures. The best of these tales submitted before the end of May will be compiled and published in print form (as well as electronically) and distributed in conjunction with the FPHA Annual Meeting in Sarasota this July.

Finally, the *Florida Public Health Review* continues to be a work in progress – not just as a USF COPH / FPHA enterprise – but one for all of Florida's public health community. Our first year of publication demonstrated the *FPHR*'s broad appeal. It is, as has been said before, a journal of and for Floridians who care about public health. Help me in 2005 to make the *FPHR* a vehicle for educating more Floridians about the uniqueness of public health.