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EDITORIAL

Consumer Health Information Technology and Public Health

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Health information is at the heart of public health; technology has facilitated the dissemination of best practices and research to consumers and their communities (Healthy People, 2020; CDC, 2010). There are multiple constituencies of public health consumers, among them, local, state, national and international jurisdictions. Over the past couple years, with other public health colleagues at Wayne State University, I have begun to reflect on a theoretical framework hypothesizing the relationship of consumer health information technology to desirable public health outcomes. Using a modified Information, Motivation and Behavior Skills (IMB) model (Fisher & Fisher 2002; Osborn & Egede, 2002), we have identified four elements as fundamental for engagement leading to desirable public health outcomes.

- Information = knowledge about factors to modify risk
- Motivation = attitudes and beliefs, social norms, support systems
- Behavioral skills = learning specific skills which facilitate lifestyle modification and prevention behavior

Figure 1: Consumer Health Information Technology and Public Health Outcomes Framework
A recent review of seven years of the *Michigan Journal of Public Health (MJPH)*, in preparation for a National Library of Medicine MEDLINE/PubMed Review Application, provided impetus to promote the *MJPH* as an embodiment of consumer health information technology. First, from a technology perspective, the *Journal* uses an electronic venue – open access - to inform, educate and empower people about health issues.

Secondly, through the lens of *Journal* expert peer reviewers, consumer issues with potential for impacting positive public health outcomes are presented. These include a variety of strategies. In one article, a local public health department described how they addressed a women’s health crisis by “Using Motivational Interviewing in Public Health Practice to Prevent Fetal Alcohol Syndrome” (Fiker et al, 2009). Another article explored enforcement of state law regarding the sale of pet turtles and health implications for families (Ballester, Vazquez, Saeed & Bartlett, 2010). Infectious disease and international cross-border issues were addressed in “Contact Investigation of Bus Travelers Exposed to a Passenger with Contagious Tuberculosis (Pillai et al, 2011).

Finally, illustrations of information technology impact are imbedded in the *Journal*, i.e., web-based education exercises on emergency preparedness terminology with medical and public health graduate students (Gleason-Comstock, Spannaus, Marks, Charbonneau & Streater, 2006). Geographical information systems (GIS) in public health have been a popular topic, i.e., using GIS to map the adequacy of prenatal care (Borders, 2007), GIS as a tool for health surveillance of illicit drug use (Polverento, 2010), and facilitation of lead screening (Kruger, Shirey & Taylor, 2012),
In an interview with Dr. John Finnegan, Dean of the University of Minnesota School of Public Health, highlighting public health futures and community-based participatory research, he identified the themes of transitioning from analog to digital culture, and the subsequent need for public health capacity building through cross-sectoral and boundary-spanning leadership.

We believe the *Michigan Journal of Public Health* will continue to be a partner in that transition, and look forward to continued promotion of consumer health information technology to our public health families.

**References**

