The declaration of interdependence

WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER.
The COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences change EVERYTHING, bringing attention to public health as never before. In many respects, the pandemic has brought light to both our underinvestment in the public health STRUCTURES that we need to prevent—and mitigate—the spread of new pathogens, and in the social, economic, and cultural conditions that shape the health of the POPULATIONS. The civil unrest that has followed has further highlighted deep-seated issues of racism and RACIAL INJUSTICE that have, for centuries, shaped HEALTH.

Before the pandemic started, we asked 45 leaders in public health, healthcare, global development, advocacy, media, and other fields to imagine, in 150 words or fewer, public health in the year 2050; we present their responses in this SYPH This Year, illuminating the directions in which the field is headed. Some responses reflect directly on the anxieties of the moment, but most, on the fundamentals of public health—including climate change, urbanization, health equity, and prevention—and how those forces need to be an inevitable part of our work toward building a healthier world.

Their thoughts build on, and inform, the public health conversations we have regularly at the school on issues of contemporary consequence that also look to the future, and that reflect and elevate the scholarship and ideas generated by SPH researchers and scholars. As a school, our goal is to meet the challenges of the moment—and of the coming years and decades.

### ABDUL EL-SAYED
**AUTHOR-FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DETROIT HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

In 2050, public health will have come into its own as a political force. It will leverage the fact that the most powerful organizing force for us is hope for a healthier world—and we will be harnessing stories to animate movements to create that world. We will be working on moral, political, ethical, economic, and strategic sustainability. We will be calling on power and money to change things, and we will be advocating for collective action to solve collective problems.

### TRAVIS McCREARY
**FORMER PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, MASSACHUSETTS LIFE SCIENCES CENTER**

In 2050, the public health community will be grappling with climate change and its effects on public health. Public health leaders will prioritize novel partnerships with the scientific community on metrics measurable in the short term—such as deaths, hospitalizations, and morgue capacity, or for example, utilizing AI for predictive epidemiological modeling, engineering for just-in-time manufacturing, bioengineering for precision-home/personalized control, and behavioral engineering (e.g., social media) for community public education.

### SANDRA L. FENWICK
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, BOSTON CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL**

By 2050, the growth of people aged 65 and over is projected to surpass the growth of children by a factor of 7 to 1. Children’s health and social needs will be steadily diluted. But their importance to society, the workforce, and our planet will be exponentially more critical. Preventing children’s chronic disease andattenuating childhood adverse developmental trajectories is a primary role and will produce gains in society and our futures with adults who clients, are productive, and will make further positive contributions to our world.

### DON BERWICK
**PRESIDENT EMERITUS AND SENIOR FELLOW INSTITUTE FOR HEALTHCARE IMPROVEMENT**

At least two priorities in public health had better be central by 2050, or the quest for health itself may be doomed. One is “our health,” the field’s enduring preoccupation with the fabric of lived health. The second is the persistence of levels of inequity and poverty on the planet that are inconsistent with morality, logic, or peace. Public health as a field has a vital role with those both a societal role, to understand the dynamics, effects, and mitigating options, and a political role, to speak up with passion and act with energy to achieve fundamental social change.

### SANDY K. JOHNSON
**PRESIDENT AND CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, NATIONAL PRESS FOUNDATION**

By the year 2050, big cities will be home to most of the planet’s population. Slums and dense housing will create far-reaching economic consequences. Civil unrest, reflecting centuries-old STRUCTURAL RACISM and social injustice, has brought issues to the fore that have long been at the heart of PUBLIC HEALTH.

### DONATO TRAMUTO
**CHAIR AND FOUNDER, HEALTH VILLAGES**

Healthcare 2050 will offer the movement away from an acute care approach to one of community-based primary care. If we want our healthcare to be in every community and for everyone, healthcare providers must be available in every community. This is true on a global scale, whereby healthcare is provided in a much more personalized manner, with the focus on creating relationships that are based on trust, equity, and social justice. The training of the next generation of healthcare providers will need to be reimagined.

### CHRISTOPHER KOLLER
**PRESIDENT, MILBANK MEMORIAL FUND**

In 2050, will public health practitioners know their work in 2020 would be in a digitally connected world, one where international political realities would be realigned, domestic politics more polarized, and community resources more insipid, disdained? Public health practitioners in 2050 will face the global effects of human-induced climate change, and how those forces need to be an inevitable part of our work toward building a healthier world.

This issue of SYPH This Year is called “This changes EVERYTHING: public health after coronavirus.” This theme reminds us that it is hard to overstate the IMPACT of the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences. A previously unknown coronavirus swept over the world in a few months, resulting in GLOBAL SHUTDOWNS with enormous and far-reaching economic consequences. Civil unrest, reflecting centuries-old STRUCTURAL RACISM and social injustice, has brought issues to the fore that have long been at the heart of PUBLIC HEALTH.

While the coronavirus was new, its consequences were not. Apart from affecting the lives of millions directly around the world, the ramifications of the coronavirus were bore disproportionately by those most vulnerable, widening health gaps and reminding us—and hopefully the world—of the importance of a public health system that aims to protect the health of all. They remind us that there is no public health without racial, social, and economic justice. They remind us that we want to build a “new normal” that is better than the “old normal” toward a healthier world.

We are committed to continuing our work contributing to the health of the public and preventing future pandemics by building a healthier world, one idea—and one student—at a time. Thank you for being part of that mission.

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Chairperson:

Sandro Galea, MD, DrPH
Dean and Robert A. Knox Professor
Twitter: @sandrogalea
By 2050, we will have succeeded in establishing real gun control—well, almost. By 2050, we will have succeeded in establishing real gun control, simply because few wanted to implement such measures. At that time, gun control will be a distant memory. By 2050, we will focus increas-

Arnaud Bernaert
Head of Global Health and Healthcare, World Economic Forum

In the next decades, healthcare delivery systems will transform drastically. The costs of chronic disease are astronomical, and we are increasingly turning to prevention and care that has a lower impact on health. In the next decades, healthcare delivery systems will transform drastically. The costs of chronic disease are astronomical, and we are increasingly turning to prevention and care that has a lower impact on health.
Peering through an imaginary lens at potential futures somehow throws the past and present into sharp relief. Given the increasingly global nature of existing and emerging threats (climate change, violence, displacement, and pandemics among them), one of the key new priorities I see for public health in 2050 is the implementation of robust population mental health strategies. More specifically, the development of frameworks that conceptualize the key determinants of community mental health, as well as investment and implementation of system and environmental strategies that set the conditions for mental well-being and resiliency at the community and population level.

In 2050, public health will have moved from sickness to health and the world will have achieved sustainable development. Children will barely credit tales of fossil fuels, famine, epidemics, wars, and devastation. As power became cheap and clean, changes to the climate slowed, stopped, and reversed. Scientists work on biomimetics, ensuring that the smallest adaptation conferring a survival advantage is described, tested, and applied. The historic focus of public health will have been rendered obsolete. Antibiotics have been withdrawn from general use, reserved for rare infections. Everyone contributes to urban farming and uses active transport. Public health has become interesting again.

Our priorities in public health should continue to be addressing the social determinants of health to lead to improved quality of life, health, and well-being for the residents of all communities, especially for those facing greater health disparities. I hope that we will be focused on understanding the economic and social conditions that affect health outcomes through policy and systemic interventions over a focus on individual behavior and circumstances. When we support our fellow community members who face the most challenges to living their best healthy lives, it only benefits the health of our society as a whole.

I like to think that, by 2050, we will have moved for closer to real health equity, in which “Everyone has the opportunity to attain their highest level of health” (APHA). We will have made progress dismantling the racial and geographic barriers to good health, like housing, education, employment, safety, and a sense of both agency and belonging. We will better understand technology’s impact on our brains and health, so that we will have the ability to use tools equitably to support healthier lives. I like to think there will be widespread agreement about the value of these goals.

The watchword of public health in 2050 will likely be “global.” The challenges we face will reflect a shrinking world, a world knitted more tightly together than ever, a world that, as a result of climate change, is subject to far more extremes in weather and to the consequent requirement of proactive, effective measures of mitigation and adaptation. Direct digital communication with individuals in far-flung communities will be easier than ever, but public health professionals will be taxed—as never before—with the responsibility of sharing essential information in ways that are accessible and credible.

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