

## EDITORIAL

### The First 10 Years

Albert Einstein was quoted as saying that time is an illusion. As I gather my thoughts to write this editorial, his statement rings true.

It seems like only yesterday that Thomas Jefferson University's Board of Trustees unanimously approved a plan to create the nation's first school of population health. It happened in July of 2008; yet, the powerful emotions I felt resurface when I recall that day. I had dedicated my career to making our nation's healthcare system safer, more cost-effective and more equitable. The new school could open up unforeseen opportunities for advancing population health. We could help chart a new course for health education and research, but it wouldn't be easy. *Population health* was a relatively unfamiliar term at that time, and we were faced with "reinventing the wheel" as we sought to create innovative academic programs, develop curricula, and acquire certification.

In the 10 years since the school's founding, the healthcare landscape has undergone considerable change. The Affordable Care Act became law and continues to ensure that millions more Americans have health insurance coverage despite multiple Congressional attempts at repeal. Heightened standards for electronic health records have paved the way for generating "big data" that makes correlations possible at the population level. New drugs have been launched (the number of new FDA-approved drugs doubled between 2016 and 2017 making it possible to prevent, manage and cure previously intractable conditions. It should come as no surprise that traditional education is finding it difficult to keep pace with the changes in this rapidly evolving and highly complex health system. In fact, healthcare professionals

who completed their training a mere 5-10 years ago find that they lack the necessary leadership skills to be successful in such a dynamic environment.

Here at what is now the Jefferson College of Population Health (JCPH), the decade seems to have flown by as we achieved - and often surpassed - ambitious goals. Faculty and staff defined - and redefined - what it means to study population health; launched a doctoral program and 6 masters and certificate programs within the discipline; and maintained one of the nation's premier Health Economics and Outcomes Research Fellowship programs (with more than 50 Fellows trained to date in collaboration with industry partners). Academic programs that were specifically designed for experienced health care professionals (eg, practicing physicians, pharmaceutical executives, community health organizers) have enabled students to develop expertise in healthcare quality, data analytics, health policy, social determinants of health, and operational efficiency.

In addition to meeting the considerable challenges of establishing robust academic programs in emerging fields of study, JCPH developed a Center for Population Health Innovation (CPHI) to facilitate communication and interaction between external stakeholders and the College and to provide ongoing training, development and support for individuals at all levels of learning. The CPHI works with diverse stakeholder groups to identify needs, catalogue available resources, develop interventions, and test solutions. The Center augments formal academic programs by offering learning opportunities in multiple formats and contexts (eg,

conferences, webinars, workshops, "boot camps," and leadership retreats) in addition to organizing and convening stakeholder meetings, expert advisory panels, policy discussions, and monthly Population Health Forums. CPHI also provides editorial services to support the creation of articles, special supplements, and textbooks.

Reflecting on the College's first decade, several things stand out for me.

- The Hearst Health Prize for Excellence in Population Health: Through an industry partnership with Hearst Health, JCPH created the framework, criteria and evaluation process for this national competition. Our faculty review applications and the top-scoring submissions are forwarded to a national panel of expert judges. Now in its fourth year, the competition has received more than 350 submissions and over \$350,000 has been awarded to population health initiatives that make a positive difference in the lives of Americans.
- In addition to the CPHI, JCPH launched two freestanding centers for population health research in Pennsylvania; one focused on urban/suburban issues and the other focused on rural health.

What lies ahead as time slips into the future? Willie H. Oglesby, PhD, MSPH (Associate Dean for Academic & Student Affairs) feels that we've only scratched the surface. His teaching team looks forward to expanding educational programming and curricula and growing an international network of healthcare reformers. Associate Dean for Strategic Development and

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# Population Health *Matters*



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Executive Director of the CPHI, Alexis Skoufalos, EdD, believes that we are only beginning to reframe our perspective on health and shift our focus to upstream factors and social determinants.

If time is illusory, I am grateful that we took a brief “time out” in July of 2018 to

celebrate this remarkable 10-year journey before we get back to work.

JCPH 10th Anniversary Report:  
<https://jdc.jefferson.edu/hpreports/5/>

JCPH 10th Anniversary Video:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPrHloxcnwc>

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