

California Public Health/Prevention Medical Leadership Forum
27th Conference Call Meeting
Tuesday, June 9, 2020, 8:15-9:30 am PT

MINUTES (draft 7/6/20, with presenters' input)

This was the Forum/s Zoom video meeting, after six years of quarterly conference calls. Unknown to the host, the standard Loma Linda University account that was utilized had a 1.5 hour limit, and the meeting terminated automatically at that point. Most participants were able to sign back in, and the meeting resumed with 19 participants.

“Handouts” (i.e., this agenda, last meeting’s minutes, and links to climate references) were attached to the email notice.

1. Zoom Videoconference (or Audio) Participation Roll Call by Institution, with Introductions of Newcomers and Guests

CAPM: Mark Horton (Chair), Ron Hattis (Secretary), Don Lyman, Susan Bradshaw, Sumedh Mankar

CDPH: Gil Chavez

DHCS: Karen Mark

OPSC: Wadsworth Murad

UC Davis SOM: Patrick Romano

Touro SOM: Catherine West

UCSF SOM: George Rutherford (presenter), James Seward

Stanford SOM: Eleanor Levin

CHSU SOM (Clovis): Sara Goldgraben

Western U SOM: Maryam Othman, Andrew Pumerantz

Kaiser SOM: Rose Rodriguez

USC SOM: Thomas Valente

UC SD SOM: Linda Hill, Margaret Ryan

UC Berkeley SPH: Michael Lu

UCLA SPH: Jonathan Fielding

SDSU SPH: Hala Madanat

Guests: Ashley McClure (presenter), Linda Rudolph (presenter), Lee Balance, Cynthia Mahoney

TOTALS: 23 members, 4 guests, total of announced participants 27 (maximum participants detected by Zoom: 28)

2. Minutes of December 17, 2019 Meeting

There were no additions or corrections. Ron Hattis had previously sent the draft out to those who had been active in the call, and the small amount of input was positive. Action: Chair Mark Horton declared the minutes to be approved.

3. Reports from Any Members Who Will Be Leaving the Call Early

a. California Department of Public Health: Gil Chavez

Gil had recently retired from CDPH but was called back to service as a retired annuitant (though actually working at least full-time) to assist with the pandemic. He transmitted a greeting from Director Sonia Angell, who he said hoped to join us at a future meeting, hopefully next time. He reported that the entire leadership of the Department, including personal direction from Dr. Angell, is involved rather than the issue being delegated to a division, and every part of the Department is involved in some way. Similarly, Governor Newsom is personally in charge of the entire state effort. CDPH is responsible for all public health aspects of the pandemic, along with CHHS agency director Galy, making these the lead state agencies since COVID-19 is predominantly a public health issue. The Operations Center has been activated and is serving as the Incident Command headquarters.

Another “old business” item, our Forum’s request for updated multilingual translations and re-posting of information sheets for HIV testing of non-pregnant persons in healthcare settings on the CDPH Website, has been completed, and can be closed.

How CDPH addresses climate change issues will be deferred to the next meeting.

b. Department of Health Care Services: Karen Mark

Karen reported that DHCS Director Brad Gilbert, who had only briefly held that position after retiring as Director of the Inland Empire Healthcare Plan (IEHP), is leaving the Department. A new Director will be appointed by Gov. Newsom.

She was asked how the May Revise budget, taking the pandemic into account and a large resulting state deficit, would affect Medi-Cal. She reported that a number of previous proposals, such as expanding Medi-Cal to undocumented persons, have been withdrawn, and Cal-AIM changes will be deferred to next year’s budget. However, there will be new COVID benefits, including all testing and indicated treatment.

Web links to references for the above:

FY 2020-21 DHCS May Revision Budget Highlights:

https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/Documents/Budget_Highlights/DHCS-FY-2020-21-MR-Highlights-051320.pdf

COVID-19 testing and care benefits:

<https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/Pages/DHCS-COVID%E2%80%9119-Response.aspx>

4. Today’s Special Topics

a. Climate Change as an Existential Public Health Crisis (continuation of climate change discussion; part of ongoing dialog): Ashley McClure (Kaiser-Permanente Oakland;

Climate Health Now), Linda Rudolph (Center for Climate Change and Health, Public Health Institute)

Today's speakers focused not on climate science or prognoses, but on specific actions to influence climate policy in which physicians and other health care workers are involved.

Linda Rudolph drew attention to two letters to Congress that have been signed on to by many health and medical organizations, one urging that investments in COVID-19 economic recovery should include rebuilding the public health infrastructure, other investments in climate resilience and health, and mitigation of climate change; and the other stating that no American should have to choose between voting and their health, and that Congress should provide resources to States to allow mail-in voting for all. Dr. Rudolph also promoted a position statement from the Bay Area Regional Inequalities Institute on capital investment strategies: https://phasocal.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/PH-Alliance-BARHII-Capital-Investment-Strategies-for-Public-Health-and-Climate-Change_4-21-20.pdf#https://phasocal.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/PH-Alliance-BARHII-Capital-Investment-Strategies-for , improving public health, addressing climate change, and promoting community resilience, including investments in climate “resilience centers” and public health infrastructure. These recommendations draw on the Call to Action on Climate, Health and Equity: A Policy Action Agenda: <http://www.climatehealthaction.org> , which has already been endorsed by about 150 health and medical organizations.

Ashley McClure urged support for a testimonial letter to CalGEM, the agency that must approve extractions of fossil fuels in California, to be presented at a public hearing on rulemaking, and calling among other reforms for a moratorium on new permits. This was her most urgent request, because the day after today's meeting is the deadline for public comments. She also solicited support for the ReWIND Act (Resources for Workforce Investments, not Drilling), which would prevent using COVID recovery funds from adding to the U.S. tax subsidies for fossil fuels (estimated by the Director of WHO to be \$649 billion/year). Senator Kamala Harris is a sponsor, and is trying to insert this bill into the HEROES recovery act. In addition, she recommended support for California AB 345 (Murastuchi) which would among other things prohibit new oil or gas wells within 2500 feet of schools, health facilities, or residential areas.

Jonathan Fielding commented favorably about linking climate change and COVID-19.

Web links to some of references above:

<https://medsocietiesforclimatehealth.org/statements/letter-congress-covid-climate-health/>
<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/116/hr6707/summary>
http://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200AB345

b. COVID-19 (continuation of pandemic discussion): George Rutherford, UCSF

George commented on the state of the pandemic in California and elsewhere in the U.S. Mortality has plateaued in California but cases continue to rise, worse in Southern CA. He showed several slides (using Screen Share) illustrating trends, including regional differences.

San Francisco Bay cases have reached a plateau. A rise in Imperial County might be related to returning Baja residents, while the Hanford area has had an outbreak at a meat processing plant. Testing has been increasing gradually, and yesterday, nationwide an estimated 70,000 tests were done. In areas continuing to experience more infections (especially in some other states), there is no true “second wave,” because the first wave never truly subsided. Instead, new waves are reinforcing the original wave.

Jonathan Fielding asked about the effects of reopening. Counties have varied in their implementation of recommended protocols. Nationwide, there were many crowds not wearing masks over the Memorial Day weekend, and another 10 days or so will be required to detect effects.

Dr. Rutherford has organized a virtual academy at UCSF with assistance from UCLA, with a goal of training and repurposing 10,000 idled but existing state and local government workers, already being paid, many from fields unrelated to public health (e.g., library workers whose libraries have been closed), as case investigators and contact tracers. This cohort is about halfway through training, which will take another month. Other UC campuses have expressed interest in similar training projects. It is not clear who will continue the work when the regular functions of these state workers reopen. The state will need to deploy trained state employees. There are jurisdictional issues between the local governments where many of these workers are expected to be assigned and the UC campuses involved with the training. Demonstration projects are being set with philanthropic funding in one or two local health jurisdictions. Besides current state employees, others are being trained, including people from Native American tribes. Other universities are interested in providing training to students.

[Early during the Rutherford presentation, the Zoom meeting unexpectedly shut down, requiring participants to find their way back and sign in again; 19 succeeded at doing so. See comments at beginning.]

Linda Rudolph asked about plans for reopening of pre-schools, day care, and elementary schools, for which CDPH has not issued recent guidelines. Mark Horton said that there is a working group in the Governor’s Office chaired by Tom Torlakson looking into guidelines for such school reopenings. He also commended K-12 reopening considerations developed by the American Enterprise Institute. George said that CDC guidelines include reducing cohort size, teachers wearing masks, and some social distancing at nap times. For K-12, plans are not finalized by most school districts, but smaller cohorts and reduced density can be achieved, for instance by having some students attend on MonWedFri while others attend TueThuSat, or having morning and afternoon time shifts. Some activities like choir should be deferred. In China, modeling assumes that teachers may reintroduce the virus to schools.

Dr. Madanat said that SDSU has been working with the San Diego County public health department on a different model, training community members in San Diego County as contact tracers, including bilingual Spanish and Arabic-speaking individuals, and others from the African American community.

George Rutherford noted that high schools are completely different, and much more like adults, with much more risk of transmission. There is research suggesting that teenagers develop adult-like receptors along their respiratory tracts, which may make them more susceptible to the virus than younger children. High school students in many countries also change classrooms during the day, increasing transmission risk. Israel has experienced outbreaks in middle and high schools but none in elementary schools.

Ron Hattis drew attention to a study by Solomon Hsiang of the UC Berkeley Goldman School of Public Policy. Dr. Hsiang is Co-Director of the Climate Impact Lab, but recently published a study in Science on COVID-19 which has attracted a lot of media attention. He estimates that emergency lockdown measures in the U.S. and five other countries (China, South Korea Italy, France, and Iran) prevented 500 million infections in those countries alone, calling it “one of humanity’s greatest collective achievements.” He is also attempting to estimate which measures were more effective than others, and according to a TV interview, was not able to confirm benefit from closure of lower school grades. As an expert on both climate change and COVID-19, Dr. Hsiang would make an ideal presenter for a future meeting if we could get him.

5. Election of Chair: This Forum is overdue on Electing or Re-Electing a Chair for a 2-year term

Nominations were open from the floor. Only one nomination was offered: Ron Hattis nominated existing Chair Mark Horton to serve for another two years. Jonathan Fielding seconded the nomination and asked for a vote by acclamation. Action: All votes were in favor. Mark Horton will serve as Chair for another two years.

Reports from Forum members (organizations and schools):

6. California Medical Association: No representative.

7. Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons of California:

Wadsworth Murad said that many of his organization’s physicians are concerned that temporary closure of medical offices is resulting in patients neglecting their routine and chronic disease care. Ron Hattis and Mark Horton recommended that as a solution for visits not requiring physical examination, more physicians utilize telemedicine, Mark also is aware of impressive safety precautions at some outpatient clinics that are conducting in-person patient visits.

8. Other Updates from Schools of Medicine: Deferred.

Mark Horton said that more time will be provided at the next meeting.

9. Updates from Schools of Public Health

UCLA: Jonathan Fielding said that the opening of the new UCLA Fielding SPH Center for Healthy Climate Solutions will be announced at the end of June or early in July. It will be co-directed by Jonathan and Michael Jerrett, Chief of Environmental Health Sciences. The Center will stress adaptation and resilience.

SDSU: See Section 4b above re Dr. Madanat's input.

10. Next Meeting: A Tuesday Morning on September 9 or 15, 2020

There was a consensus that Zoom worked well (except for the unexpected shut-down) and should be tried again.

Submitted by Ronald P. Hattis, Secretary