

Recognizing the public health and primary care partnership as the backbone of a healthy community



The need

Public discourse on health policy has focused largely on individual care. But public health experts recognize that access to quality, affordable individual care is not enough to ensure either individual or population health if people live in unhealthy communities and environments. We in public health sometimes struggle to describe the need for—and the value of—a strong collaboration between public health and primary care in maximizing both individual and population health.

The solution

The Oregon Health Authority, Public Health Division, developed a new way of articulating a message about the interdependence of public health and primary care. A set of illustrations showed the intersection, as well as the discrete roles, in our lives and our communities in a way that was relevant and engaging to policy makers, primary care providers and public health advocates.

The process

Understanding current messaging on public health and primary care was an essential first step. Then, we worked in close collaboration with experts in both fields to articulate a new message, and to create a powerful graphic image illustrating the intersection between public health and primary care in people's everyday lives. Great care was taken to reflect diversity in people, setting, and type of interaction.

The results

Public health and primary care professionals alike have expressed gratitude for having a new and more clear way to describe both the unique and overlapping contributions each field makes in maximizing individual and population health. Other public health professionals can use this model to clearly articulate the essential connection between public health and primary care, and to engage both public health and primary care professionals as advocates for healthy communities.



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