

The theme of this special issue is *Moving Translational Approaches to Community Transformation*. Its emphasis is on the work of multidisciplinary teams that implement and assess the impact of translational research, policy, practice and educational initiatives on the transformation of community/population health in the State of Georgia. The premise of this collection of manuscripts, brief reports and practice notes is that moving the proverbial “needle,” toward improving the public’s health involves approaches that do more than catalog and advance our understanding of the mechanisms and correlates associated with health disparities. These important research findings must also inspire strategic action that begins, rather than ends, with peer-reviewed publications. Products should include replicable and scalable processes and outcomes that are both statistically significant and characterized by demonstrable evidence or potential to sustain positive change.

Let us consider traditional research teams and how this special issue expands our thinking. First, team science refers to the systems and practice of research conducted by more than one person or group within complex social, organizational, political, or technological systems (Hall, et al, 2018). Research on team science, the *science* of team science, is designed to foster understanding of the factors that interact to influence success of research teams. These teams are more often composed of those with similar academic training and in the same location (2018). Teams that span an organization (include broader representation than a single department or discipline) or geographical boundaries (includes members that in different locations with and organization and country) demonstrate enhanced scientific productivity and impact (publications and grants; Bales et al., 2014; Jeong & Choi, 2015; Sud & Thelwall, 2016). Cross-disciplinary teams and related research, that prioritizes the integration of concepts, theories, approaches from more than one discipline, are more likely to collaborate. Translational research is one such discipline.

Translation research is the process of turning observations in the laboratory, clinic or community into interventions that improve the health of individuals and the public (National Center for Advancing Translational Science, 2019). This may include diagnostics and therapeutics to medical procedures and behavioral changes. The translational research spectrum is characterized by stages, T0 -T5, and are described elsewhere (2019). Transformative health research and implementation strategies can begin at any point along the translational research continuum. While the implications for community impact and improved outcomes for those bearing the burden of increased morbidity and mortality are implied, community and patient groups are frequently not engaged as members of research teams, from the conceptualization of research.



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This special issue invited community-engaged translational research, policy, practice and education papers that responded to these gaps. All manuscripts included featured at least two of the characteristics central to its theme. They were: 1) engagement of multidisciplinary research, policy or education partners to develop, implement, evaluate and disseminate innovative approaches; 2) engagement of the community, ideally from the inception of research concept and/or identifies potential community needs, strengths and implications/impact of research; 3) convening of interdisciplinary teams (that may include, but are not limited to, non-academic industry, agency, and policy partners) to prioritize multi-level translation, dissemination and proof of impact strategies through rigorous research and/or evaluation; 4) results that broaden the evidence base through data-driven proof of impact on health equity in underserved or special populations; and 5) implications for, or evidence of, adoption and/or adaptation to communities of: 1) those who are underserved/at-risk/vulnerable, 2) science, and 3) practice (clinical, public health, policy). While some may agree that each of these tenets are public health relevant, most of our efforts do not collectively or equally value these priorities. These tenets of research translation and scholarship are collectively coined T^X™ and detailed elsewhere (Henry Akintobi et al, 2019).

Contributors to this special issue represent a broad spectrum of public health issues and response strategies. Maternal and perinatal mortality, cardiovascular health and diabetes risk reduction are among topics described through an understanding of policy and ethical contexts. Cross-cutting issues that underpin racial/ethnic disparities and the social justice dialogue include racial segregation and firearm violence. The statewide movement to elevate the roles of

community health workers are detailed with emphasis on gaps, cost-benefits, impacts and outcomes. Innovative interventions serving special populations (Hepatitis C positive, uninsured adults and those living with sickle cell) through community-clinical interventions discussed. Multidisciplinary teams preparing the next generation of public health professionals (medical students and high school students, respectively) steeped in community health pedagogy and poised for public health action are featured. Finally, community-based participatory research planning models and outcomes, in both rural and urban Georgia, are included.

I write this editorial during unprecedented times that could not have been predicted when this special issue was conceptualized two years ago. The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded some and introduced to others the realities of obstinate health disparities and the social inequities that are complex and magnified during times of public health crisis. Now, more than ever, innovative, multidisciplinary public health teams must be deployed towards contextually-informed and community-driven mitigation strategies. I trust that both the COVID-19 era and the examples included in this special issue inspire urgency in elevating public health's position as an existing connector of disciplines, voices and leaders who all have a stake in the improved outcomes we seek. It is characterized by

community-engaged practice, policy and science, not just for this moment, but for the movement that advances health equity.

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