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## Meeting Public Health Challenges

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## From the Editor

### *Meeting Public Health Challenges*

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In an era which accompanies major concerns regarding the health of Georgians, one must take a moment to reflect upon future challenges that face public health professionals in the state. Such contemplation allows for a broader understanding of the gap between what is and what should be and affords strategic placement of preventive opportunities. For example, Georgia is faced with a growing problem with weight gain with 65% of adult men and 53% of adult women being either overweight or obese<sup>1</sup>. This growing trend is especially problematic for young children and adolescents who, as they age, will become increasingly susceptible to chronic health conditions such as hypertension, some forms of cancer, and diabetes. Related to the issue of weight is that of cardiovascular disease (CVD). Currently, Georgia's death rate from CVD is around 12% higher than the national average<sup>2</sup> and is the number one cause of death. Looking beyond chronic diseases, one must consider infectious diseases (both emerging and reemerging) as potentially threatening, particularly in light of newly discovered pathogens (such as HIV and H5N1), that have surfaced over the past 25 years. [Incidentally, Georgia ranks number eight in the U.S. in terms of cumulative AIDS cases<sup>3</sup>] These concerns are in addition to the omnipresent matters of lifestyle, behavioral choice(s), and social / family composition. Drug abuse,

(including tobacco, alcohol and the increasing use of methamphetamine), sexual risk-taking that could result in unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections, as well as living a sedentary lifestyle each cost the state millions each year. It's been estimated that for every dollar spent on tobacco prevention, for example, yields \$15 in savings for Georgians<sup>4</sup>. Each of these threats serves to necessitate consideration of what works and what doesn't as well as collaboration among health professionals in the state relative to research. Such communion allows for the distribution of ideas which can do nothing but expand insights necessary for practitioners who are currently designing intervention strategies in an effort to reduce the impact of these health concerns. To this end, the Georgia Public Health Association has embarked upon a unique method of communication; The *Journal of the Georgia Public Health Association*. The primary goal of jGPHA is to serve as an outlet for health professionals within the state; a conduit through which communication on topics ranging from best practices, original research, and commentary may be explored. By opening a window onto the machinery behind public health in Georgia we as a community are in a much better position to formulate additional approaches toward prevention, education, and improvements in health within the state.

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<sup>1</sup> *Overweight and Obesity in Georgia, 2005.*

<sup>2</sup> *2005 Georgia Data Summary: Cardiovascular Disease.*

<sup>3</sup> *HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report, 2004*

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<sup>4</sup> *Burden of Tobacco in Georgia, 2000*