PatagoniaHealth

Kevin M. Sherin, MD, MPH, MBA, FACPM, FAAFP

Director, Florida Department of Health in Orange County

Dr. Sherin's views on how mobile technology can increase reach and reduce cost while cloud computing can make health data secure.

Tell us a little bit about your background. How did you end up in your current role?

I started off in family medicine in Illinois and then moved into public health. I have been involved in public health in two different states and have spent the last 10 years as the Public Health Director at Florida Department of Health in Orange County.

Why are you passionate about public health? What motivates you to go to work every day?

I see this as a chance to make a difference for large groups of people not just individual patients. Through public health, I have a chance to help over 1.2 million people who live in Orange County and impact the additional 60 million tourists per year. I have the chance to help many people if I do the appropriate things. There are many needs in the community that have to be addressed such as access to care, gaps in services, children's asthma that doesn't get treated adequately, where do I stop?

What do you see as the primary opportunities for public health organizations in changing landscape?

Leading change. Some of the opportunities we see are with clinical integration with Informatics, inclusion of data exchanges, accreditation of health departments and the Affordable Care Act (ACA). We are a local health department in a statewide system and that's an opportunity as well as a challenge. We will need to learn how to relate to the change in this environment. A lot of change is going on; this is a great opportunity if we can lead and be included.

What do you see as the primary challenges for public health?

With the ACA a lot of people are talking about population health which is a good thing. However, people are using this term liberally without having the true understanding of what it means to manage and improve population health. Local health departments like ours are well connected and have been keeping local populations healthy. So there is an opportunity to help, however, governmental health funding is shrinking. Shrinking funding is the big challenge.

How do you see technology (software, cloud, apps, mobile) benefitting those in public health?

Technology provides an opportunity to increase access, improve patient care and improve population health while managing with less funding. However, there are great opportunities and challenges to make new innovative technologies work in governmental institutions. We have to be smart, enable the private and public partnerships work to deploy new technologies quickly and efficiently. Mobile technology makes it easy and cost effective to reach our large population at a very low cost while cloud computing makes the information more secure. We need to do more in the cloud and leverage all the apps out there and serve as a site for development to make the pathways smooth so they can evolve in governmental systems as well.

What are three specific actions public health organizations can take to move toward being more successful?

I actually think they 1) need policies that will support public health and 2) data use agreements with hospitals. We hope the hospitals will support that. Trained staff and workforce development is huge and a third great need.

What's your perspective on Electronic Health Record EHR Meaningful Use for public health—is it good, bad or ugly? Why?

I'm actually the Vice Chair of the (E public health and Informatics Work Group) for the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) so I am very pro Meaningful Use. The Federal government has mandated the use of Electronic Health Record software and included the necessary safeguards for privacy and security. Of course it's good. We need policies to support state & local health departments to be engaged at the federal level – how do we do this? We are supposed to be Meaningful Use (MU) 2.0 but we need to get it to MU 3.0 in time. Many are struggling to begin the process. Many local departments are tiny and need more resources and big brothers and sisters to lead them and be their champions at the state level. We need vanguard players that are doing this and it's going to take time, effort, money and grants. Where we have had cutbacks it is going to take a lot of support. A public health EHR system with effective data exchange and new apps and technologies can help us all to get started and become more efficient across regions.

Where do you see the public health field five years from now? What should public health do to prepare for these changes?

Let me be optimistic and say that the waves have gone out and they should come back in. We can then have a more robust system going for data use five years from now: getting systems in place, hubs that have been built out, data use agreements in place, champions in the field, collaboration between health plans, and informatics in health departments. I envision a bright future: more private and public relationships, a hybridized environment, emergence of a better trained public health working more closely with less barriers, and with more meaningful exchange of data - maybe a little more of what exists in San Diego, Spokane and Boston. What shall we do to prepare? More standardization for informatics, accreditation processes, development of the workforce and deployment of technologies.

About Kevin M. Sherin, MD, MPH, MBA, FACPM, FAAFP

Health Officer & Director, Florida Department of Health in Orange County

Kevin Sherin, MD, MPH, MBA, FACPM, FAAFP is Health Officer and Director of the Florida Department of Health in Orange County, since 2004. He is also a Clinical Professor of Family Medicine at the FSU College of Medicine, Tallahassee, and an Associate Clinical Professor at the UCF College of Medicine, at Orlando. Dr. Sherinhas held key roles in numerous Health associations and is currently Vice Chair of the NACCHO Public Health Informatics Workgroup. Throughout his career, DrSherin has received many awards and accolades, read more http://orchd.com/about/index.asp.

Accomplishments in Orange County have included: Improved community recognition of health department services, community engagement for health equity and infant mortality, a large Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) federal award, and NACCHO best practice and promising practice awards.

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