



fellow SPOTLIGHT:

LOREN ROBINSON, MD, FCPP

Fellow since February 2016



What initially interested you about joining the College?

I had visited the Mütter Museum on several occasions, including with a high school student from North Philadelphia whom I mentor. She was intrigued by the various oddities and specimens, and the unique ways she could learn about them. I became interested in the fascinating history and rich legacy of The College of Physicians of Philadelphia, and wanted to know more about how to get involved in promoting the work of the College across the city, region, and state.

In 2015, the Pennsylvania Department of Health named you its Deputy Secretary for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention. Tell us about that position and your goals for the people of Pennsylvania.

As the Deputy Secretary for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, I am responsible for the state's public health education and programming activities. In this position, I oversee programs from a wide array of subject areas including the Women, Infants, and Children Nutrition Program (WIC), nutrition and physical activity, HIV disease, immunizations, newborn screening, cancer prevention, tobacco prevention and control, childhood lead poisoning, hepatitis C, and health risk reduction. Additionally,

the Office of Health Equity falls within my purview and has recently been reinstated at the Department of Health. My goal is the same as the mission of the Department of Health: to work to improve the health of ALL Pennsylvanians. It is also my goal to continue to grow the public health workforce and to recruit and retain some of the brightest minds in public health to flourish at the Pennsylvania Department of Health.

You have done a lot work examining health disparities and how the communities where we live affect our health. What are some of your findings and how do they influence your work in State government?

By reinstating the Office of Health Equity at the Department of Health, we have re-established the Department's commitment to reducing health disparities by advancing health equity. It is essential that people understand how health disparities can affect all populations, not just a particular racial or ethnic minority. Dr. Karen DeSalvo, the Acting Assistant Secretary of Health has put out a call to action around a concept called Public Health 3.0. This concept links health and healthcare leaders to community leaders in an effort to improve the health of communities by strengthening access to quality healthcare services as well as services that improve the social determinants of health. It is this work that drives our health equity efforts across the state. Specifically, adult and childhood obesity and tobacco use are two public health issues that have health disparities tightly interwoven in their matrices. When we look to improve health and health outcomes around these two issues, not only must we look at the general population, but we also have to take a tailored approach to make sure we can address disparities in a community like Philadelphia, which is a very different approach to what may work across the state in the county of Fayette.

How could you envision the College playing a role in addressing health disparities?

As the Office of Health Equity works to advance Public Health 3.0 across the Commonwealth, in the city of Philadelphia and our region, the members of the College can serve as both thought and action leaders in reducing health disparities. The first step in addressing health disparities for Fellows, members, employees, volunteers, and supporters of the College is to familiarize themselves with the concepts of health equity and Public Health 3.0. Next, people can find spaces in both their personal and professional

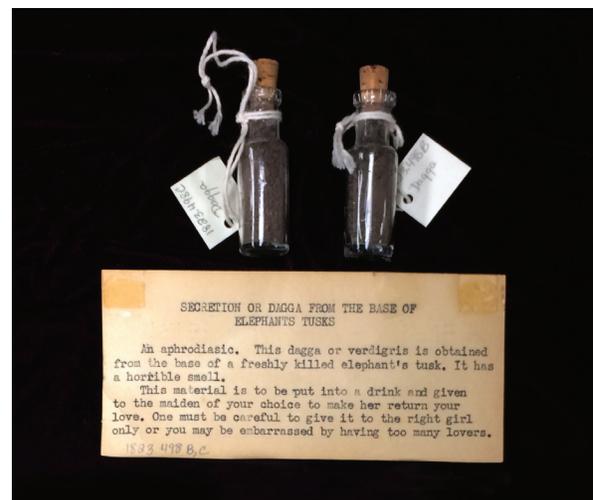
lives to address the social determinants of health and to be a purveyor of health equity. Lastly, as we begin to address disparities within specific public health areas, such as obesity or tobacco use, the College can partner with the Department on our various initiatives to improve health for all Pennsylvanians.

Which College lecture or event are you most anticipating this fall?

Since joining the Department of Health, not a week has gone by without some discussion about vaccines. Whether evaluating an outbreak or changing school immunization policy, vaccination is something that keeps me quite busy on a regular basis. As such, I am looking forward to the discussion of "Vaccination Pure and Spurious." In the spring, I am particularly interested to attend the College's Public Health Grands Rounds "Poverty as a Public Health Issue." As I work to advance health equity, much of the work I do in the area of social determinants of health examines the intersection of poverty and public health on a population health level.

Tell us about one of your favorite items in the Library or the Museum.

My favorite artifacts of the Mütter Museum are those donated by the Zulus of Southern Africa. As a hopeless romantic, my absolute favorite of these is **a vial of aphrodisiac made from dagga**, a powdered substance found on the inside of an elephant tusk. ■



"This dagga or verdigris is obtained from the base of a freshly killed elephant's trunk [...] This material is to be put into a drink and given to the maiden of your choice to make her return your love."