

The Third Digital Health Promotion Executive Leadership Summit Goes Virtual

Much has changed since we convened the inaugural Digital Health Promotion Executive Leadership Summit in the nation's capital in 2018.

We conceived and launched the first Summit for several reasons. First, because of the ubiquity of digital technology and reach of social media, it was apparent that the time was right to bring greater focus to the promise that digital technology and social media hold for improving public health. Second, we believed that more needed to be done to bring the academic, industry, and government sectors together in dialogue to discuss the opportunities — and challenges — to forge collaborative partnerships across the public and private sectors in developing and evaluating the next generation of digital information and health communication technologies and messaging. And third, we sought to facilitate a conversation among leaders from each of these sectors that would result in a consensus on a “Common Agenda” to guide future social media and digital technology principles and practices that advance health promotion.

Last year's Summit, our second convening, expanded the scope of the conversation. Once again, we invited and heard from some of the world's leading thinkers working in the digital space. The topics covered a wide range of issues, including how the digital space is being used to address the opioid epidemic, mental health, and vaccine hesitancy. And with speakers and experts that included Vice Admiral Jerome M. Adams, MD, MPH, the U.S. Surgeon General, we also sought to illuminate the issues, challenges, and opportunities presented by digital intelligence, the spread of misinformation, online patient communities, censorship in social media, and the emerging global legal frameworks that are being brought to bear on the digital space.

This year, the contours of our third Summit have been shaped by the rapid and inexorable spread of COVID-19. And if there was ever a time when a public health crisis has made crystal clear just how important the digital space has become, it is this moment. This year's Summit, “Digital Media & Health: Cross-Sector Collaboration for the Public Good During a Pandemic,” will be virtual and focus on how the COVID-19 pandemic is driving the rapid adoption of digital technologies and new ways of working across sectors to improve and protect public health.

This third Summit will bring together yet another stellar group of global leaders from across the sectors who are working in digital health communication. Once again, the Summit will address a wide range of pressing issues, this time shaped by COVID-19: misinformation, intersectoral collaboration, health information policies on digital platforms, digital media issues in children and adolescents, digital media in low and middle-income countries, and patient engagement — all in an effort to envision the uses of social media in service of the public good.

In the meantime, I invite you to review the intellectual products of our previous Summits, both published in 2019: a consensus statement and declaration of principles — [“Toward a Common Agenda for the Public and Private Sectors to Advance Digital Health Communication”](#) — published in the *American Journal of Public Health*; and [“Advancing the Science and Translation of Digital Health Information and Communication Technology,”](#) a supplement issue of *Health Education & Behavior*, sponsored by the NIH Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research, that contains perspectives and reports of the newest thinking and empirical research in the field of digital health, including the revised [Common Agenda 2.0](#).

As always, it has been a privilege and honor to work with Summit Co-Chairs, Lorien Abrams of the George Washington University and Joe Smyser of the Public Good Projects, to plan and organize this year's Summit. Our thanks go to a superb international Planning Committee, whose talents, resources and insights have shaped an exciting Summit program. And finally, I thank our Summit Convener, Elaine Auld, chief executive officer of the Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE), and the visionary SOPHE Board of Trustees who invested in this convening from its genesis and now to mount the effort that will enable us to meet virtually.

I look forward to engaging you during the Summit and I hope you will find our conversations both catalyzing and convivial.

John Allegrante, PhD, LHD (Hon.)
Summit Co-Chair