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Preface: 60 Years of Public Health Science at CDC

In 2006, CDC celebrates its 60th anniversary. From the agency's relatively humble beginnings in 1946 as a malaria-control agency through its rapid growth in mission and expansion of staff and public health partnerships by 2006, science has been the foundation for everything CDC does. Public health science comprises numerous disciplines that, combined, are more than simply the addition of their parts. This synergy is public health's unique scientific strength.

Public health's "patient" is the community. CDC's mandate to protect the community has broadened as scientists have learned about what constitutes health and how they can positively affect health outcomes in the "patient." CDC's health protection goals, formally adopted in 2005, capture the essence and spirit of the agency's charge: healthy people in every stage of life, healthy people in healthy places, people prepared for emerging health threats, and healthy people in a healthy world.

Accomplishment of these goals requires close collaboration across scientific disciplines, a multidisciplinary approach to public health problems, and highly coordinated efforts to implement solutions. The increasing complexity of factors that contribute to health requires use of the full spectrum of scientific disciplines, and expansion of scientific disciplines at CDC has been impressive. From the entomologists and engineers dominating CDC's scientific ranks in the 1940s to the addition of epidemiologists, veterinarians, microbiologists, and medical officers through the 1970s to the latest addition of economists, behavioral and social scientists, molecular biologists, statisticians, urban planners, informaticians, and other scientists, current CDC staff represent approximately 25 scientific disciplines.

This supplemental issue of *MMWR* celebrates CDC's scientific strength and diversity by describing the public health contributions of 11 disciplines. It begins with the fundamental, cross-cutting disciplines of laboratory sciences and epidemiology, then focuses on disciplines new to public health, yet essential to CDC's success. Although this supplement only partially illustrates the variety of disciplines contributing to public health, the 11 articles provide a flavor of public health's scientific diversity and strength. They highlight contributions of many disciplines to each of CDC's health protection goals and emphasize how synthesizing scientific information is essential to impact health and maximize scientific investments.

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