

Researchers urge modernizing public health system to avoid future COVID-19 shortfalls

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The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the holes in public health systems across the U.S., IUPUI researchers outline in a new piece published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

In the article, researchers and [public health](#) leaders from the Richard M. Fairbanks School of Public Health at IUPUI, the Indiana University

School of Medicine and the Marion County Public Health Department call for the modernization of local and state public health systems, as well as the national system, and outline their recommendations.

"We need to invest in long-term solutions to the problems we are currently facing," said Brian Dixon, Ph.D., MPA, lead author of the article and associate professor and director of public health informatics at the Regenstrief Institute and the Fairbanks School of Public Health.

"The pandemic has demonstrated how the [public health system](#) is historically underfunded and will likely transition back to being underfunded after the pandemic ends."

The researchers write that while public health agencies were challenged when trying to coordinate efforts, the lack of integrated [data](#) and the inability to rapidly analyze the data contributed to the slow response to COVID-19. At the beginning of the pandemic, the lack of real-time hospitalization data prevented the necessary flow of information to public health systems until weeks after the first case was diagnosed. This prevented timely coordination and action by public health authorities.

"We do not have to reinvent the wheel; a framework to address these problems already exists," said Paul K. Halverson, professor and founding dean of the Fairbanks School. "The Public Health 3.0 model supports a transformation of our current public health system by developing multisector coalitions, integrating health into all policies and expanding the public health workforce."

In addition to utilizing the structure of the Public Health 3.0 framework, the researchers call for advancing U.S. public health information systems by adopting the use of interoperable electronic health records with health care organizations. Many public health agencies continue to rely on outdated technology and lack connectivity to providers. The researchers advocate for advancing public health linkages to a broader set of partners

and industries to address the health and well-being of many populations.

More information: Brian E. Dixon et al. Deficient Response to COVID-19 Makes the Case for Evolving the Public Health System, *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* (2020). [DOI: 10.1016/j.amepre.2020.07.024](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2020.07.024)

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