

ESSAY

Mobilizing Action Toward Community Health (MATCH): Metrics, Incentives, and Partnerships for Population Health

David A. Kindig, MD, PhD; Bridget C. Booske, PhD; Patrick L. Remington, MD, MPH

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How are we doing — and how can we do better? These are perhaps the most basic questions a community can ask regarding the health of its residents. Yet communities have not been given the necessary tools to answer these questions with validated, consistent measures, evidence-based policies and practices, and incentives for improvement.

In response to this need and with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, we initiated a project called Mobilizing Action Toward Community Health (MATCH) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Population Health Institute (1). We created a logic model (Figure) that guides our work and demonstrates the principal activities of 1) producing county health rankings in all 50 states, 2) examining partnerships and organizational models to increase involvement and accountability for population health improvement, and 3) developing incentive models to encourage and reward communities that implement evidence-based programs and policies that improve population health.

We believe that together these efforts will increase awareness of the multiple determinants of health, promote engagement by a more diverse group of stakeholders, and stimulate development of models that promote evidence-based programs and policies — eventually leading to improved health outcomes and reduced health disparities.

The most visible product of this effort so far is the county health rankings (2) released in early 2010. Several other components of our project, based in part on a proposed “pay-for-population-health” performance system advanced in 2006 (3), are aimed at understanding how we might best support population health improvement at the community level. To that end, we commissioned 24 essays to

critique the assumptions underlying such a system and to suggest approaches for overcoming potential barriers to its implementation. We worked with these authors, MATCH and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation staff, and several guests in a 2-day meeting in late 2009 in Madison to discuss the essays and develop an agenda for future practice and research activities for

improving population health.

In this issue of *Preventing Chronic Disease*, we present the 7 essays on population health metrics (4-10), introduced by 2 commentaries (11,12). These essays describe the types of tools that can be used to measure and

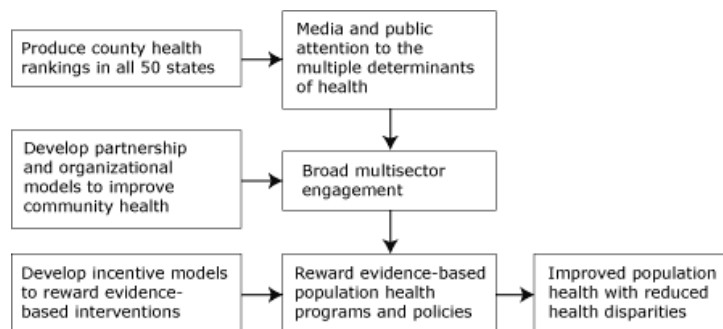


Figure. The Mobilizing Action Toward Community Health (MATCH) logic model. This model shows how incentives can be used to improve population health and reduce health disparities.

monitor the health of populations and are the first of 3 sets of essays to appear in this and the next 2 issues.

The next set of essays will describe incentives that can be used to promote programs and policies that improve population health, and the role for population health partnerships in these efforts. The final set will summarize the discussion of the 2009 meeting and outline cross-cutting themes and priorities for research and practice in population health improvement. We hope that the essays will stimulate discussion and mobilize action that improves population health outcomes in the coming decade.

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Author Information

Corresponding Author: David A. Kindig, MD, PhD, University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, Population Health Institute, 760 WARF, 610 Walnut St, Madison, WI 53726. Telephone: 608-263-4886. E-mail: dakindig@wisc.edu.

Author Affiliations: Bridget C. Booske, Patrick L. Remington, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.

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