

# Guest Editors' Message: Hawai'i's Health Care Workforce

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Dear Readers,

This special edition of the HJH&SW focuses on the shortage of health care professionals across the state of Hawai'i, which follows previous workforce supplements published in 2017 and 2012. This edition shares the critical work being done by the authors to expand and strengthen our health care workforce, with special attention to rural health, culturally aware practices, and interprofessional teamwork. As current faculty members and proud graduates of the John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM), we join forces with our health professions colleagues in our commitment to ensuring a robust workforce to care for all of Hawai'i's communities. The articles chosen for inclusion in this supplement are indicative of the type of work that needs to be done, the collaborations that need to happen, and the actions we need to take to grow and support our health care workforce here in Hawai'i.

In this supplement you will read about recent trends in the physician workforce, as summarized by the Hawai'i Physician Workforce Project. The 2020 assessment revealed that the State of Hawai'i is in the midst of a severe shortage of physicians, the worst since the project began in 2010. This shortage is mirrored in the Registered Dietitian Nutritionist 2019-2020 Workforce Assessment. With COVID-19 causing new stressors on providers, leading many to retire, move closer to family, or decrease their FTE to combat burnout, we are likely to see an even further exacerbation of this shortage in the Workforce Assessments in the coming years. It is essential that we find ways to better support those currently in practice while we nurture the next generation of physicians and other health care professionals who will eventually take their places.

We are fortunate that several of these programs already exist, a few of which we share within this special edition. Here we spotlight programs such as the *'Imi Ho 'ōla* Post-Baccalaureate Program, which focuses on supporting underrepresented students on their path to medicine, the *Mauli Ola Mālamalama*, a scholarship program designed to bolster a culturally aware Native Hawaiian health care workforce, and the JABSOM rural health program, which provides students the opportunity to experience clinical practice on the neighbor islands. It is clear that where and how one trains can have a significant impact on career and practice choice. For this reason, JABSOM has committed to increasing its class size in recent years and expanding opportunities for training on neighbor islands. Unfortunately, the 1990-2018 JABSOM specialty match and residency position data report shows a downward trend of students matching into primary care programs and a decrease in the number of JABSOM residency positions. We hope that this report will support better alignment of residency positions with the expanding JABSOM class size and that special attention can be given to retention and recruitment of JABSOM graduates to practice in Hawai'i, especially in primary care and other specialties with critical shortages.

As we better understand the role of social determinants and their impact on the health of individuals and communities, it has become clear that interprofessional collaboration is essential to achieve a healthier society. This edition also highlights the important curricular work being done at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo Daniel K. Inouye College of Pharmacy to increase the capacity for future pharmacists via interprofessional education and collaboration, telehealth communications, and competency in drug information skills to improve health care



quality measures. Additionally, the Pacific Islands Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program at the University of Hawai‘i provides a model for partnership across academia, primary care, and community-based organizations to transform care of the geriatric population in Hawai‘i and the Pacific. The final manuscript in this edition discusses access to contraception and provides a framework for collaboration across medical specialties to improve access to reproductive health services across the state. These manuscripts call us to collaborate across disciplines, practice settings, and geographic locations, in order to do the important work needed to address our health care workforce shortage and the patient care needs of our state.

We hope this special edition will inspire you to work with us in strengthening our pathway and training programs and in supporting our health care providers to offer the highest quality care to the people of Hawai‘i. Mahalo for taking time to read about the incredible work being done by our colleagues.

*With aloha,  
Teresa and Vanessa*

## **Mahalo**

The call for papers went out late 2020 with submissions in early 2021. It has been a long process for the authors and editorial staff. Throughout the last 2 years of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have all had to practice patience and flexibility. To that end, we appreciate the understanding and endurance of our authors as we journeyed together. Mahalo to the multiple reviewers who contributed their time and expertise to reviewing these manuscripts, as well as the copy editors and journal editorial staff for their flexibility and attention to detail as they helped us bring this publication to fruition. A special mahalo to Dr. Kelley Withy for her mentorship and guidance throughout this process and to Carolyn Imhoff for assisting us in keeping track of the myriad details needed to publish this supplement.

## **Conflict of Interest**

The authors do not identify a conflict of interest.