

Umair A. Shah, M.D., M.P.H.



In May 2013, Umair A. Shah, M.D., M.P.H., was appointed as the Harris County Public Health & (HCPH) Executive Director and the Local Health Authority for Harris County, Texas – the third most populous county in the United States with a population of 4.3 million spread over 1778 square miles, the approximate size of the state of Rhode Island.

Prior to joining HCPH, Dr. Shah served as the Chief Medical Officer at the Galveston County Health District and since 1999, an emergency department physician at Houston's well-respected Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center. Dr. Shah assumed the dual role as Deputy Director and its Director of Disease Control & Clinical Prevention upon joining HCPH in 2004, overseeing all departmental clinical and infectious disease activities. Under his leadership at HCPH, the department has won numerous national awards for its innovative work.

After growing up in Cincinnati, Ohio, Dr. Shah earned his B.A. (philosophy) from Vanderbilt University and his Medical Degree from the University of Toledo Health Science Center. During his training, he completed an international health policy internship at the World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland. He then completed his Internal Medicine residency, Primary Care/General Medicine fellowship and Master's in Public Health (M.P.H. focus in management & policy sciences) at The University of Texas Health Science Center. During his fellowship training, his clinical concentration centered on patients with HIV/AIDS.

Dr. Shah has provided leadership in a variety of Texas-based initiatives, including the Harris County Medical Society, Texas Medical Center, Texas Association of City & County Health Officials (TACCHO), Texas Public Health Coalition, Texas Department of State Health Services, and Texas Medical Association. Dr. Shah has also been asked to serve on a number of national initiatives involving the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, and Department of Homeland Security; the American Public Health Association, National Association of County & City Health Officials (NACCHO) and the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academies of Sciences. Currently, he serves on the Board of Directors for both TACCHO and NACCHO, the Health Sciences Policy Board for IOM, and CDC's Advisory Subcommittee to the Director. His global work has taken him from London to Dubai; from Geneva to Karachi and Dhaka.

Dr. Shah understands the relationship between leadership theory and practice, and has been selected to take part in the National Public Health Leadership Institute and the American Leadership Forum. His on-ground leadership in large-scale emergency responses have been numerous, including Tropical Storm Allison; Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Ike; novel H1N1 influenza pandemic; the devastating earthquakes in Kashmir and Haiti; and most recently, the domestic responses to Ebola and Zika virus, respectively. Notably, Dr. Shah served as co-medical branch director for the 27,000 Katrina evacuees housed at the Houston Astrodome in 2005.

In addition to emergency planning and response, Dr. Shah's interests include population health, wellness and prevention; health innovation/use of social media; health equity; global health; and community & stakeholder engagement. He is sought statewide and nationally to present on a variety of important health-related topics, and has presented to the Texas Legislature and to U.S. Congressional staff. He stays engaged in clinical patient care, academic teaching (University of Texas and Baylor College of Medicine), and remains actively involved in the local community.

On a personal level, Dr. Shah is a writer, entrepreneur, sports enthusiast, devoted husband and loving father of two.