

ACPM Member Spotlight: Tista Ghosh, MD, MPH

Donna Grande, MGA, CEO of ACPM

The pandemic has certainly heightened the awareness of preventive medicine physicians and the important role they serve in addressing disease transmission and mitigation strategies. I hope that readers are also more aware of the diversity of the profession through the spotlight feature of the American College of Preventive Medicine (ACPM) members. In this edition, I would like to introduce you to Dr. Tista Ghosh, a CDC-trained epidemiologist and public health physician, board-certified in Preventive Medicine, who has been advancing important messages through her health journalism and social media outreach. Since the pandemic began, she has been advising companies with essential workers on ways to keep employees safe while continuing operations. This work has been filling an important gap in public health messaging that resonates with both struggling workers and human resource teams. In May 2021, she received a media excellence award for written health journalism from the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, a sister society to ACPM.

Previous spotlights have included Dr. Maria Mora Pinzon of the University of Wisconsin, Dr. Ed Fess, Chief Medical Officer of Arizona's CareFirst and Dr. Chris Pernel, Chief Strategic Integration and Health Equity Officer at University Hospital. These members shared rich aspects of their careers with me and it brings me great pleasure to share insights from another member Dr. Tista Ghosh, who previously served as Chief Medical Officer of the Colorado State Health Department and as a member of the U.S. Community Preventive Services Task Force (CPSTF), Dr. Ghosh brings another unique perspective to the specialty of preventive medicine.

What attracted you to the specialty of Preventive Medicine?

As a medical student, I was interested in primary care. But during one of my rotations, I noticed that every clinic day had a very similar pattern — patients came in with obesity, diabetes and hypertension on a repetitive basis. I felt we really needed to address the root causes of this pattern, and not just treat it after the fact. In discussing my concerns with my mentor, I learned about the field of public health. I did one rotation at a health



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department, and one at the World Health Organization, and I was hooked. I decided to do a combined residency in internal and preventive medicine.

How has the training in preventive medicine helped to advance your career in occupational settings?

Training in preventive medicine taught me to critically examine the health of populations (as opposed to individuals), use data to identify patterns and understand root causes, and then develop and evaluate appropriate interventions. This training was useful for me in a variety of settings — local public health, state public health, and then the health of employee populations. The population setting may change (e.g., it can be a town, a state, or a group of essential workers), but the concepts of using data to identify patterns and tailor interventions remains the same.

What key roles do you see Board-certified Preventive Medicine physicians serving in the post-pandemic era of health care?

Preventive medicine physicians have a critical role in communicating important messages — not just about healthcare issues, but about social determinants, self-care, and other aspects of disease prevention. We need to bridge the healthcare industry with public and population health, with messages that reach and influence behaviors of a variety of target audiences.

What advice would you offer young physicians who are beginning their journey in medicine?

Social determinants of health play a much larger role in determining a person's health than healthcare. So, if you enter a clinical specialty, do your best to be a bridge for patients between healthcare and other sectors (e.g., housing, transportation, food assistance) as this is where health begins and continues.

What is the best advice you received that made a difference in your career decisions?

My mentor who introduced me to public health told me, "there is only so much you can change from one

clinic – if you truly want to address the societal issues that lead to disease, you should consider public health."

From your point of view, what is the key benefit that a professional association such as ACPM can offer an individual?

ACPM and other societies offer physicians the chance to have a voice in larger policy discussions. There is only so much one physician can do from their own clinic – but there is power in a collective voice. So, by lending their voices to a professional society, physicians may be able to influence policies and messages that significantly impact the health of large populations.