

MD/MPH alumna sees the bigger picture in health care

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Mary Sparacello

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(Photo of Dr. Joanna Locke)

As a Tulane medical student, Dr. Joanna Locke was on traditional path to becoming a doctor when she was introduced to the world of public health. That addition to her

career trajectory, a master's in public health from the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, took her from the hospital hallways to a wider world where she believes she can make an even bigger difference.

"Health care will always be critically important, but so is preventing people from getting sick in the first place," said Dr. Locke (M *03, PHTM *03), who owns consulting firm [Locke Public Health](#). "In an ideal world, we wouldn't need as many hospitals and doctors, because we would all be so healthy. Of course, that's never going to happen, but I think we can certainly reduce acute and chronic health conditions."

She pointed to the example of cholera: "All the supportive treatment in the world is not going to save as many people as good sanitation."

The global focus on public health at Tulane, with many international students coming at the field from their own points of view, gave Dr. Locke a well-rounded education. "I liked all the perspectives present in any given room."

After Tulane, she completed an internship in psychiatry and a residency in preventive medicine and public health. She holds a California medical license.

Dr. Locke has over 15 years of experience in the non-profit, education and health care sectors. She worked for a New York City non-profit focusing on college student mental health and suicide prevention. Then, she oversaw health and wellness for the Oakland Unified School District in California.

After consulting on and off for years, she formally went into business for herself. Currently, she is supporting research coordination for a large healthcare system and aiding COVID-19 response for a local health department. Her real love is synthesis writing, combining her undergraduate English major with her graduate work in health.

The field of public health is vast, offering myriad career opportunities. Her advice for current public health students is to obtain on-the-job experience before starting a degree to help carve out a career path. "I definitely think working in the field before you get your degree can be helpful, because there are so many directions to go in."