Visibility of Scientist Officers

The mission of the Commissioned Corps of the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) is to protect, promote, and advance the health and safety of our nation. To this end, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has published a Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2010 – 2015. The overarching goals for the Strategic Plan are as follows:

1. Transform Health Care;
2. Advance Scientific Knowledge and Innovation;
3. Advance the Health, Safety, and Well-Being of the American People;
4. Increase Efficiency, Transparency, and Accountability of HHS Programs and;
5. Strengthen the Nation’s Health and Human Services Infrastructure and Workforce.

The Scientist Category, one of the eleven categories of the USPHS Commissioned Corps, is composed of 312 officers who hold doctoral degrees from over 40 general disciplines. More than 60% of Scientist officers demonstrate expertise in one of three major disciplines including, Epidemiology/Public Health, Psychology, and the Biological Sciences.

Scientist Officers have an enormous impact on the body of work across many public health agencies including:

- Agency of Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ),
- Bureau of Prisons (BOP)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) / Agency of Toxic Substances and disease Registry (ATSDR),
- Department of Defense (DoD)
- Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
- District of Columbia Commission on Mental Health Services (CMHS—formerly St. Elizabeth's Hospital)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
- Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)
- Indian Health Service (IHS)
- National Institutes of Health (NIH)
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
- Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR)
- Office of Public Health and Science (OPHS)
- Office of the Secretary (OS)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- U.S. Marshals Service (USMS)
HHS Strategic Plan 2010 - 2015

Within the various agencies, Scientist Officers contribute directly to 23 of 25 objectives (indicated with a check mark below) within the HHS Strategic Plan:

Strategic Goal 1: Transform Health Care
   - Objective A: Make coverage more secure for those who have insurance, and extend affordable coverage to the uninsured
   - ✓ Objective B: Improve health care quality and patient safety
   - ✓ Objective C: Emphasize primary and preventive care linked with community prevention services
   - ✓ Objective D: Reduce the growth of health care costs while promoting high-value, effective care
   - ✓ Objective E: Ensure access to quality, culturally competent care for vulnerable populations
   - ✓ Objective F: Promote the adoption and meaningful use of health information technology

Strategic Goal 2: Advance Scientific Knowledge and Innovation
   - ✓ Objective A: Accelerate the process of scientific discovery to improve patient care
   - ✓ Objective B: Foster innovation at HHS to create shared solutions
   - ✓ Objective C: Invest in the regulatory sciences to improve food and medical product safety
   - ✓ Objective D: Increase our understanding of what works in public health and human service practice

Strategic Goal 3: Advance the Health, Safety, and Well-Being of the American People
   - ✓ Objective A: Promote the safety, well-being, resilience, and healthy development of children and youth
   - ✓ Objective B: Promote economic and social well-being for individuals, families, and communities
   - ✓ Objective C: Improve the accessibility and quality of supportive services for people with disabilities and older adults
   - ✓ Objective D: Promote prevention and wellness
   - ✓ Objective E: Reduce the occurrence of infectious diseases
   - ✓ Objective F: Protect Americans’ health and safety during emergencies, and foster resilience in response to emergencies

Strategic Goal 4: Increase Efficiency, Transparency, and Accountability of HHS Programs
   - ✓ Objective A: Ensure program integrity and responsible stewardship of resources
   - Objective B: Fight fraud and work to eliminate improper payments
   - ✓ Objective C: Use HHS data to improve the health and well-being of the American people
   - ✓ Objective D: Improve HHS environmental, energy, and economic performance to promote sustainability
Strategic Goal 5: Strengthen the Nation’s Health and Human Services Infrastructure and Workforce

- Objective A: Invest in the HHS workforce to meet America’s health and human service needs today and tomorrow
- Objective B: Ensure that the Nation’s health care workforce can meet increased demands
- Objective C: Enhance the ability of the public health workforce to improve public health at home and abroad
- Objective D: Strengthen the Nation’s human service workforce
- Objective E: Improve national, state, local, and tribal surveillance and epidemiology capacity

Five Priority Assignment Areas
To achieve the goals of the Strategic Plan, the Assistant Secretary for Health (ASH) has identified 5 priority assignment preference areas for new calls-to-active duty (CADs) which include:

1. Assignments Serving Vulnerable and Medically Underserved Populations
2. Assignments in an Isolated, Hazardous Duty or Hard-to-Fill Location/Specialty/Profession
3. Assignments Requiring Rapid Deployment or Providing 24/7 Support
4. Assignments having Regular Engagement with Members of Other Uniformed Services
5. Assignments Meeting a Public Health Need

Scientist Officers currently occupy positions within each of these five priority assignment categories. For example, work at FDA by Scientist Officers to bring new vaccines to the market, ensure that only safe and effective products regulated by FDA are provided to the general public, and that the public is protected from products that do not meet FDA’s standards. Scientist Officers also currently are assigned to the DoD as part of the DoD/HHS Memorandum of Agreement to increase access to mental healthcare at military medical treatment facilities. (For further information on the 5 pillars see “The Future of the United States Public Health Service: Moving Forward with a New Paradigm in Recruitment”)

National Prevention Strategy
In the nation’s first ever National Prevention Strategy (NPS), published on June 16, 2011, the Surgeon General outlined major priorities and encouraged cross-sector partnerships to increase the health of Americans at every life stage through:

1. Healthy & Safe Community Environments
2. Clinical & Community Prevention Services
3. Empowered People
4. Elimination of Health Disparities

The work of Scientist Officers directly contributes to the NPS and is summarized in the 2011 Scientist Category Prevention Strategy.
Recommendations for Scientist Officers

The Scientist Category is a diverse group of officers. It is precisely this diversity that allows Scientist Officers to function at every point along the public health spectrum from the initial scientific discovery to application to policy and administration. Therefore, given the current relevance of Scientist Officers and the potential for continued impact on improving the nation’s health as detailed above, it is recommended that this group’s diverse skillset continue to be highlighted and that future efforts focus on increased visibility and continued integration with other Professional Advisory Committees and agencies.

How can I increase the visibility of my work in support of the USPHS mission?

1. Describe on how your job/activities relate to the HHS Strategic Plan, the National Prevention Strategy, and the 5 priority assignment preference areas during oral presentations.
   a. Worksheet [DOC] to assist officers in describing how their job relates to the HHS Strategic Plan, the National Prevention Strategy, and the 5 priority assignment preference areas
   b. Sample Powerpoint slide [PPT]

2. Highlight your work and/or deployments as a USPHS Scientist Officers through publications, newsletters, meetings, and/or at conferences.

3. As a lead author or co-author of an article, email publication references to the Science Subcommittee chair to be compiled in the Scientist Officer Publication List. (In preparation).

4. Always identify your affiliation in official meetings, manuscripts or presentations. For example, use your rank when introducing yourself. For publications and presentations, reference “U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps”. If officers can list more than one affiliation then do so as separate lines like the following example:

   1 Division of Reproductive Health, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA

   2 U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, Atlanta, GA

If not, then put it on one line as the following:

   Division of Reproductive Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA, U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corp

As corresponding author, use your rank as follows:
5. Actively engage in all levels of policy development. Policy work is sometimes underappreciated, but is a tremendous driver behind transforming healthcare for the American people.

6. Help increase interagency collaboration and share your vision about these collaborations and/or partnerships with the Executive Board.

**Visibility through SciPAC**

As a category we can make a greater impact than as individual officers. SciPAC has new and on-going activities to promote the visibility of Scientist Officers to agencies within HHS and outside HHS. In this changing climate, these activities will require input and adjustments as we proceed forward.

- Partnership Working Group: Led by the vice-chair, this group of high-ranking Scientist Officers and our civil servant voting member will work towards identifying strategic partnerships and developing the relationships to help promote Scientist Officer visibility beyond the PAC.
- **2011 Scientist Category Prevention Strategy**
  - White paper developed by the Science Subcommittee to address and describe the work performed by Scientist Officers under the National Prevention Strategy.
- Development of a ready-deployment list of Scientist Officers
  - In order to facilitate OFRD requests for particular skillsets, Scientist Officers who are interested in being deployed can email the Recruitment, Retention, and Readiness Subcommittee to sign-up on the ready deployment list. This ready-deployment list is voluntary and represents an additional avenue for scientist officers to be deployed.
- Recommendations for Scientist Category Relevance and Visibility
  - The Policy Subcommittee has prepared a white paper that forms much of the information on this website.
- SciPAC Newsletter
- Monthly attendance by Scientist Officers at the OBC graduation

For further information, contact the current SciPAC Chair, Vice-Chair, and/or Secretary