



National Association of County & City Health Officials

The National Connection for Local Public Health

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Contact

Theresa Spinner, MA  
Director, Media & Public Relations  
Direct: 202-783-5551  
[tspinner@naccho.org](mailto:tspinner@naccho.org)

## Dr. Umair A. Shah Takes Office as President of the National Association of County and City Health Officials

*“What people often lack is the creative imagination to see what could be, rather than what is, and the courage to move in that direction.”*

**Washington, DC, July 19, 2017**—Umair A. Shah, MD, MPH, Executive Director of [Harris County Public Health](#) (HCPH), serving Harris County (TX) – the third largest county in the nation with approximately 4.5 million people, is the new President of the [National Association of County and City Health Officials](#) (NACCHO). He assumed office on July 1.

Dr. Shah described his vision for NACCHO during the opening general session of the organization’s 2017 Annual Conference held in Pittsburgh, July 11-13. More than 1,200 attendees from around the country had gathered to share best practices and hear from national, regional, state, and local health officials about the future of public health and to address today's public health challenges.

In his address, Dr. Shah described his personal journey into healthcare as a practicing physician and then into public health. He encouraged the audience also to share their stories to help change the “invisible narrative” public health faces because others often do not understand its vital role in shaping the health of the nation. “We are local public health” said Dr. Shah, “We are local health departments. We are bound by one common theme: the relentless pursuit of health. We know our work, we know our place,

and we know our value.” Dr. Shah’s aspirational speech went on to emphasize the need for health departments to use “creative imagination” and to innovate and engage while challenging them to achieve new heights during times of uncertainty. Putting this principle into action, he offered insights on how he and his leadership team have led HCPH’s exceptional growth since becoming director in 2013. Dr. Shah laid out his vision for NACCHO in the upcoming year, focusing on building capacity in health departments, connecting NACCHO members across different disciplines and interests, amplifying the voice for health departments whether large or small, and broadening the scope of NACCHO to work alongside other key partners whether local, state, national or global in nature – in both the public and private sectors.

Describing Dr. Shah, NACCHO Interim Executive Director and Chief of Government Affairs Laura Hanen, MPP said, “NACCHO is fortunate to have a visionary president with such an outstanding record of success on the local level as well as a national and international presence. Dr. Shah is a tireless promoter of the great work of our local public health departments. The theme of our annual conference this year was ‘Public Health Revolution – Bridging Clinical Medicine and Population Health’. As a practicing physician, Dr. Shah has special insights into what is needed to turn this revolution from a desire into a reality.”

Dr. Shah earned his BA in Philosophy from Vanderbilt University and MD from the University of Toledo Health Science Center. He completed an Internal Medicine residency, a General Medicine/Primary Care fellowship, and an MPH in Management & Policy Sciences at The University of Texas Health Science Center. During his training, he also completed an international health policy internship at World Health Organization (WHO) headquarters in Switzerland.

Dr. Shah has enjoyed a distinguished career as an emergency department physician at Houston’s well-respected Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center. He launched his career in public health as Chief Medical Officer of Galveston County’s Health District before joining HCPH to oversee its extensive clinical health system and infectious disease portfolio. Under his leadership, HCPH has won numerous awards including as recipient of NACCHO’s 2016 Local Health Department of the Year award for its innovation, engagement, and equity work.

As President of NACCHO, Dr. Shah chairs the Board of Directors of the association. The Board establishes NACCHO's strategic direction and initiatives, ensures that annual goals are met, sets the annual legislative agenda, and provides financial oversight. The Board is NACCHO's public face and represents members in matters of policy, public health practice and collaboration with partners in the public and private sectors.

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**About NACCHO**

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) represents the nation's nearly 3,000 local governmental health departments. These city, county, metropolitan, district, and tribal departments work every day to protect and promote health and well-being for all people in their communities. For more information about NACCHO, please visit [www.naccho.org](http://www.naccho.org).