

# UMass Center for Clinical and Translational Science announces a partnership with the City of Worcester to transform public health using a data-sharing platform developed at UMass Chan Medical School

This new partnership, Worcester Integrated Health Data Exchange (WIHDE), is a pivotal initiative aimed at transforming public health in Worcester by providing a secure environment for sharing health data across the city's healthcare organizations. This platform will facilitate a comprehensive understanding of health inequities, trends, risk factors, and outcomes, significantly enhancing our community's health management capabilities. Data integration from multiple sources will allow a better understanding of the patterns leading to disparities.

The City of Worcester, under the direction of Dr. Matilde (Mattie) Castiel, Commissioner for Health and Human Services, is leading this effort in partnership with Adrian Zai, MD, PhD, MPH, UMass Chan Chief Research Informatics Officer and director of the Research Informatics Core (RIC), a joint venture between the UMass Center for Clinical and Translational Sciences and the UMass Chan Department of Population and Quantitative Health Sciences. In her capacity as commissioner, Dr. Castiel oversees the divisions of public health, youth services, veterans affairs, elder affairs, and homelessness along with advancing important new initiatives that fall under the scope of youth violence and the current opioid crisis, mental health, reentry from jail, and COVID-19.

The WIHDE initiative resulted from a COVID-19 equity task force group that shifted focus after the pandemic to address the most prevalent healthcare concerns in the city. Dr. Castiel explained that the equity task force group chose to partner with the RIC to provide a platform that can successfully provide the integration needed. According to Dr. Castiel, *"This process of combining data would be the first in the state."* She also noted, *"It will bring awareness to the community, and different groups can use the same data to see what is happening so that we all can work together to lower the numbers."*

Dr. Zai and his research informatics team's data-sharing platform will enable the partnership to surmount barriers that researchers currently face with access to secure data. The Platform for Learning Health System at UMass Chan Medical School (PLUM) is a state-of-the-art cloud-based system designed to embody the core principles of a Learning Health System. Funding for PLUM development was provided by the UMass Center for Clinical Translational Science, supported by a grant from the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences.

This phased initiative will focus first on the opioid crisis. According to Dr. Zai, *"Our plan is to integrate opioid data from all health centers across the city of Worcester, starting sequentially with UMass Memorial and Family Health Center of Worcester. This step-by-step approach allows for a systematic and controlled expansion, significantly impacting public health by deepening our understanding and enhancing our response to the opioid crisis."*

## PLUM

