

► **DirectTalk** MUSINGS FROM THE 10TH FLOOR

David Dyjack, DrPH, CIH

Sunrise. Was I in Colorado? Mental cobwebs courtesy of a late night arrival into Denver slowly dissolved as my morning espresso ritual achieved its intended results. Just where was I supposed to be? A quick scan of my schedule revealed that I was to meet in a couple hours with key influencers in the pool, spa, and hot tub industry at a hotel about 30 minutes north of the city. The occasion was the triennial conference of the Council for the Model Aquatic Health Code (CMAHC), a group that I recognized were the magicians behind efforts to maintain and improve the hospitality industry's recreational water health and safety. What I didn't anticipate was a subsequent invitation to join their board of directors. What was I getting myself into?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Model Aquatic Health Code (MAHC) is the only all-inclusive model pool code in the U.S. Similar to restaurant owners and operators who reference food codes for guidance on how to keep food safe to eat, those who work in or with public aquatic facilities can reference MAHC to learn how to provide a safe swimming and aquatic environment. MAHC is comprised of a set of voluntary guidelines that are based on the latest science and best practices known to help make public pools healthy and safe for swimmers, visitors, and staff. If followed, the MAHC guidelines can help reduce the risk for disease outbreaks, drownings, chemical injuries, and other types of injuries at public pools.

What does this code mean for us? State and local government officials can use some or all

MAHC Truck Delivers Results

The Model Aquatic Health Code can be a cornerstone of aquatic health and safety.

the guidelines to develop and update their own pool codes. The last time I reviewed the adoption status, about half of the jurisdictions in the country had adopted or were considering adopting some or all of the code. Aquatics professionals can also use the code as a reference guide when they are designing and building new aquatic facilities or considering updates for their operation and maintenance policies. CDC releases an updated edition of MAHC every 3 years. The process to update MAHC is managed by CMAHC.

So, what is CMAHC? CMAHC is a non-profit organization that was created to partner with CDC on a few key measures related to MAHC. First and foremost, CMAHC works with CDC to keep the code up-to-date with the latest science and best practices. This endeavor is achieved by managing the MAHC update process that happens every 3 years. During that time, aquatics and public health experts can submit, comment on, and vote on proposed changes to MAHC. The voting takes place following CMAHC's triennial

Vote on the Code Conference. The next major meeting of CMAHC will take place October 13–14, 2020, in Houston, Texas. Based on the results of the voting, CMAHC updates MAHC with the proposed changes and submits it to CDC for final consideration and publication.

The update process for the next MAHC edition is well underway as public health and aquatic experts have already started to submit proposed changes. I encourage you to add your voice to this process. As regulators, inspectors, and health and safety professionals, you have valuable insight to contribute reflecting what you have learned in your work that could make aquatics healthier and safer for everyone. You can register to become a CMAHC member, learn more about the MAHC update process, and submit proposed changes at www.cmahc.org.

For the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA), this conversation is not abstract. NEHA formally endorsed MAHC through a board-approved policy statement in July 2017. You can learn more at www.neha.org/node/59193. We also encourage every regulatory jurisdiction and relevant private industry sector to adopt the practices outlined in MAHC. In the court of law, attorneys might ask, "Did you know, or should you have known, that MAHC represented the best available science in protecting the swimming public's health and safety?" How would you or your jurisdiction respond?

I wish there had been a MAHC early in my career when I was retained to work on a *Cryp-*

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NEHA NEWS

In response to the survey, NEHA Executive Director Dr. David Dyjack has charged a group of NEHA staff to “think radically about quality improvement around the NEHA customer experience and to construct e-learning that is simple and easy to access, simple and easy to understand, and arranged in a manner that makes sense to individual members.”

NEHA would like to thank the new members who thoughtfully responded to the 2020 membership survey. We take your feedback seriously and we strive to be an association that continues to understand and address your professional needs.

Sheila Davidson Pressley Passes Away

NEHA was saddened to learn of the passing of Sheila Davidson Pressley, DrPH, CPH, DAAS, REHS, HHS, on January 24, 2020. Dr. Pressley was the dean of the College of Health Sciences at Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond, Kentucky. She was also an active member of NEHA and the American Academy of Sanitarians. NEHA expresses its deepest sympathies to her family, friends, and colleagues. An In Memoriam for Dr. Pressley highlighting her career and impact on the environmental health profession will be published in the May 2020 *Journal of Environmental Health*. 🙏

Did You Know?

You can access NEHA’s policy statements at www.neha.org/publications/position-papers. NEHA’s latest policy statement addresses the adoption and implementation of the current Food and Drug Administration’s *Food Code*. Other recent policy statements cover cottage foods, clean energy, ear piercing guns and microblading, mosquito control, and cannabis-infused food products.

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tosporidium outbreak at a water park in the Western U.S. The case was complicated, as it involved the accidental comingling of surface waters with traditional wading and swimming pools. Today, our professional network has resources that provide specific guidance on *Cryptosporidium* risk management and those resources are available at the CMAHC website.

CMAHC does a lot more than just manage updates to MAHC. They are involved in cutting-edge research on emerging public health issues related to public aquatic facilities and work to promote MAHC adoption nationwide. While there is insufficient space to cover all that in detail here, I would love to discuss it further with anyone who may be interested in learning more. Please reach out to me or the new CMAHC executive director, Kristie Riester (kristieriester@cmahc.org), and join us in our mission to ensure a healthier and safer swim experience for everyone.

This story started with a blurry-eyed, jet lagged David Dyjack, trying to make sense of a Friday morning appointment with the pool and spa industry. This saga ends with me accepting a MAHC board position, a role I have embraced since 2018. I envision nationwide adoption of the Food and Drug Administration’s *Food Code*—everyone eats. I also



The pool outside Taliesin West in Scottsdale, Arizona. Photo courtesy of David Dyjack.

envision nationwide adoption of MAHC—virtually everyone swims in pools, intermittently relaxes in a spa, or enjoys a salubrious moment in a float tank. The story ends with a steely-eyed David Dyjack who firmly believes MAHC can be the cornerstone of aquatic health and safety and an intellectual vehicle that drives us into the future. 🙏

Acknowledgement: Kristie Riester, executive director of CMAHC, was a contributor to this column.

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