

Public Health Timeline 1826-2001

1826	The Government of Hesse builds and supports a chemistry laboratory at the University of Geissen—in effect, the world’s first public health laboratory.
1858	Louis Pasteur defends his seminal work on fermentation, disproving 1,000 years of theory suggesting that disease was caused by swamp gas.
1865	In the past four years, more soldiers in the US Civil War have died of disease than on the battlefield.
1871	The Massachusetts State Board of Health sets up a laboratory to study the sanitary conditions of the Bay State’s water supply.
1872	The American Public Health Association (APHA) is founded, giving evidence of the increasing importance of public health in American society.
1876	German Robert Koch postulates the germ theory when he proves that <i>Bacillus anthracis</i> is the specific cause of anthrax.
1883	Pasteur demonstrates that hens can be vaccinated against chicken cholera, laying the foundation for many of the medical and laboratory advances of the 20 th century.
1887	Joseph Kinyoun establishes the bacteriology laboratory at the Marine Hospital on Staten Island, NY. Five years later, the laboratory is relocated to Washington, DC.
1892	The New York City Health Department establishes a division of bacteriology to rest for cholera in the city’s water supply.
1894	William H. Park’s laboratory at the New York City Health Department begins the production of diphtheria antitoxin.
1899	Colorado becomes the 14 th US state to establish a public health laboratory in the last 20 years. The Laboratory Section of the American Public Health Association is founded at APHL’s annual meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota.
1900	Walter Reed reports at the APHA Annual Meeting that mosquitoes carry yellow fever. The lifespan of the average American born at the turn of the 20 th century is a shade over 47 years.
1901	In France, Bordet and Gengou demonstrate the efficacy of complement as the bases for diagnostic tests for many infectious diseases.
1904	The US Pure Food and Drug Act spurs many of the states to begin using their laboratories to test for food contamination.

1906	August von Wasserman of the Robert Koch Institute used the complement developed by Bordet and Gengou to create the first efficient and cost-effective test for syphilis.
1914	World War I begins.
1916	The Society of American Bacteriologists, formed in New Haven, Connecticut in 1899, begins publication of the <i>Journal of Bacteriology</i> .
1918	US military authorities reject 200,000 conscripts because they are infected with venereal disease.
1919	Twenty million people are dead worldwide in the wake of the Spanish influenza pandemic.
1924	The Southern Pacific Health Laboratory Association, the nation's first organization for public health laboratory directors, is founded.
1929	Wall Street Crash.
1938	The National Venereal Disease Control Act of 1938 puts state public health laboratories in the forefront of the nation's war on syphilis.
1942	The US military begins the production of penicillin, the world's first wonder drug, discovered by Sir Alexander Fleming the previous year.
1946	The federal government establishes the Communicable Disease Centers (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia.
1948	The United Nations establishes the World Health Organization (WHO). Fluoridation of community water supplies begins.
1951	The Association of State and Territorial Public Health Laboratory Directors (ASTPHLD) is organized at the 1951 annual meeting of the Conference of State and Provincial Public Health Laboratory Directors in San Francisco.
1953	Dr. Jonas Salk introduces the first successful vaccine against poliomyelitis.
1960	Dr. Robert Guthrie develops a screening test for phenylketonuria (PKU).
1962	Rachel Carson raises awareness of environmental threats in <i>Silent Spring</i> . State public health laboratories are soon doing environmental testing. The first voluntary PKU screening test is established in Massachusetts.
1963	The first effective vaccine for measles is licensed in the United States.
1965	President Lyndon Johnson signs Medicare legislation which provides government-subsidized health insurance for elderly Americans.
1967	Congress passes and President Johnson signs the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Act (CLIA), which requires that all public health laboratories

	and laboratory personnel involved in interstate commerce be licensed. The new law, in effect, gives the CDC a regulatory function for the first time.
1970	Congress establishes the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). The nation's first Earth Day in April creates an American environmental consciousness.
1971	The Surgeon General recommends against routine smallpox vaccination for children, a clear signal of the success of CDC and WHO smallpox eradication efforts.
1972	The passage of the federal Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act during an 18-month period put state public health laboratories solidly in the business of environmental testing.
1975	CDC technicians identify naturally occurring Marburg Fever in South Africa.
1976	Public health laboratories on the East Coast help identify the source of Legionnaire's Disease and an outbreak of potentially fatal Swine Flu.
1979	The federal government released the landmark study, <i>Healthy People: The Surgeon General's Report on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention</i>. First national meeting on Neonatal Screening Programs, Atlanta, GA
1980	Public health laboratories in Minnesota and Wisconsin identify nine cases of toxic shock syndrome in adult women in less than a month.
1981	The first AIDS patient is seen at the National Institute of Health in June; by August, the CDC reports 108 cases of the new disease.
1985	The first international AIDS conference is held in Atlanta.
1986	First Consensus Conference on Testing for Human Retroviruses. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approves AZT as the first antiretroviral drug to be used as a treatment for AIDS.
1989	ASTPHLD and CDC create the National Laboratory Training Network (NLTN) and National Laboratory Partnership (NLP).
1990	ASTPHLD establishes a Washington, DC presence. First national conference on Lyme Disease testing.
1991	ASTPHLD establishes an office of international activities.
1993	First conference on Laboratory Aspects of Tuberculosis.

1994	Establishment of ASTPHLD's Environmental Health Program through Cooperative Agreement with US Environmental Protection Agency, later through CDC cooperative agreement.
1996	First conference on Drinking Water and Public Health to establish how to utilize drinking water monitoring data for public health assessment.
1997	PulseNet Update conferences begin. ASTPHLD changes its name to the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL).
1998	CDC invites APHL to establish the Laboratory Response Network as the first line of defense in the nation's bioterrorism prevention initiative.
1999	West Nile Virus was discovered in the US. The American Academy of Pediatrics Newborn Screening Task Force publishes its report, "Serving the Family from Birth to the Medical Home."
2000	APHL moves into its office at 2025 M Street in Washington, DC. APHL members in forefront of identifying spread of West Nile Virus in US. All states, at a minimum, screen newborns for PKU and congenital hypothyroidism. Most states test for many other diseases.
2001	Evolution of the traditional Newborn Screening Symposia to the Newborn Screening and Genetic Testing Symposium. The Florida Department of Health Laboratory identifies a strain of anthrax spores sent to the offices of a weekly tabloid newspaper; APHL members assist US Postal Service in testing facilities for anthrax contamination.