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## Zoom On: Jasjit Ahluwalia, Champion of Minority Health and Health Disparities



**Prof. Jasjit Ahluwalia**

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Dean - Rutgers School of Public  
Health  
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Jasjit S. Ahluwalia will be the new dean of the Rutgers School of Public Health, effective April 2015. The nationally recognised researcher in health disparities and nicotine addiction in minority populations previously chaired the National Advisory Council for Minority Health and Health Disparities at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), a role to which he was appointed by former Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. He is also actively engaged in global health, with two research projects in Mumbai and New Delhi, India.

### Current Activities and Research Focus

Ahluwalia is currently a professor of internal medicine and epidemiology at the University of Minnesota Academic Health Center. In 2005, he was recruited by the centre to become the founding executive director for its Office of Clinical Research. He was awarded a \$6.2 million NIH grant in 2009 for the establishment of the university's Center for Health Equity.

The primary focus of Ahluwalia's research work is nicotine addition and smoking cessation in smokers of African-American descent. He has conducted clinical trials, qualitative research and secondary analysis, receiving more than \$21 million in funding as principal investigator, and another \$80 million as co-investigator. He recently extended his research to include the role of menthol in smoking cessation, as well as the pharmacokinetics of nicotine, pharmacogenetics and cancer biomarkers.

### The Path to Rutgers

Ahluwalia's appointment to the position of dean at Rutgers was announced in January. He replaces George Rhoads, the interim dean, who will continue as a faculty member.

"With Jasjit Ahluwalia's exceptional experience, expertise, and energy, the Rutgers School of Public Health will build on its existing strengths and develop new areas of study and exploration, while fostering the growth of junior-level researchers," said Brian Strom, chancellor of Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences. "These future achievements will benefit students, New Jerseyans and the rest of the country."

His past roles have included a joint appointment as assistant professor of both health policy and medicine at Emory University's Schools of Public Health and Medicine, where he became one of the inaugural fellows of the Carter Center at Emory. In 1997, at the University of Kansas, he was named vice chair and director of research for the Department of Preventive Medicine and Public Health; he became department chair in 2001 and the Sosland Family Endowed Chair in 2003.

### **Awards and Education**

Ahluwalia is the recipient of multiple awards, including a lifetime achievement award from the American Public Health Association, the Herbert W. Nickens award for leadership and improving minority health, and the Society of Behavioral Medicine's national award for excellence in mentoring. He sits on that latter's board of directors, and also serves on the board for the Association for Clinical and Translational Sciences.

Ahluwalia holds a combined MD/MPH degree from Tulane University's Schools of Medicine and Public Health. He studied clinical epidemiology and trained in clinical research during a two-year fellowship at Harvard University, where he earned a MS degree in health policy from its School of Public Health. He attended New York University for undergraduate studies.

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