Meet Joe. Joe works at a health care system in a major U.S. city. This is Cynthia. She works at a public health agency in the same city. She would like to track the incidence of hepatitis C quickly and effectively and knows this information can be found in the patients’ electronic health records at Joe’s hospital.

Because hepatitis C is a reportable condition, Joe would like to share this information through electronic health records. However, Joe and Cynthia use different data fields and analyze data differently. They speak different “information languages.”

When they try to talk to each other, the “language barrier” gets in the way. Joe and Cynthia can’t share information because they collect, perceive and talk about it so differently.

That’s where Alexa comes in! Alexa is an informatician working at the same agency as Cynthia.

Alexa can take the information in the electronic health records... … and translate it into an “information language” that Cynthia can understand.

Now, thanks to Alexa and the translation tools provided by informatics ... ... Joe and Cynthia can exchange information without a language barrier.

By making sure people speaking different languages can understand each other, informaticians can bring them together. Joe and Cynthia can share information more effectively and the result is that public health can intervene more quickly to prevent additional disease cases.
Just as architects plan buildings with the needs of its future occupants in mind, informaticians plan information systems that account for function and the needs of its users. A well-planned information system produces the knowledge needed to make sound public health decisions.