## Dickson Despommier

Abstract:
We have the technological know-how to observe at any scale processes in the environment that might affect our lives in an adverse way. In orbit 300 miles above the surface, we can observe macro-phenomena – fires, volcanic eruptions, soil erosion, over-crowding, adverse weather, etc. We can even get an idea of just how many of us there are if we turn out the lights! At ground zero, we see things one on one – skin cancer lesions, the effects of too much arsenic in our drinking water, tooth decay, etc.. A closer look yet (microscopic or molecular) gives us an *up close and personal* view of the infrastructure that comprises our world – genes and their structure, mutations, adducts that cause cancers, etc.. Environmental sciences strive to define those aspects of our physical, chemical and biological environment that impact on our lives in positive as well as negative ways. Since we all have to live in the environment (save a few orbiting the planet), ecological forces shape our lives, determining health outcomes for the vast majority of us. The flow of energy through earth's life forms eventually impacts our daily lives in ways that we only show concern for when our very health is at stake (e.g., food and water contaminations, etc.). Prevention of disease, both infectious and non-infectious, is the goal of all modern societies. We cannot hope to achieve this desired end unless we first understand the ways of the natural world, of which we are just a small part.

QUESTION: What does the slogan, first popularized by the Ninex Communications Systems, "We are all connected" mean in terms of ecological processes and public health? Please be specific.