Public Health Practice

Stories from the Field
The University of Texas School of Public Health
Student Practicum Experiences
Fall 2013 – Regional Campuses
The practicum experience is an integral part of the MPH and DrPH curricula. Public health students are provided with the opportunity to apply their classroom knowledge to real world settings through which they make a meaningful contribution to a public health organization.

Under the guidance of a community preceptor and faculty sponsor, students from all divisions gain a deeper understanding of public health practice, interact with professionals in the field, and expand their repertoire of professional skills.

This twelfth-edition e-magazine showcases student practicum experiences throughout the Fall 2013 semester. (Prior semesters may be accessed through the e-book, a collection of student abstracts and e-magazines describing their experiences.)
## Practicum Topics

Serving Size: 1 Practicum per Student  
Servings per e-Magazine: 19

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Identifying Communities Vulnerable to Natural Disaster

Determining vulnerability and resilience in communities affected by landslide, flood and drought in Uttarakhand, India

By: Linda Al-Alawy Seefeldt

My practicum experience took place in Mussoorie, Uttarakhand, India with Landour Community Hospital (LCH). The setting is breathtaking – situated at the foothills of the Himalayas. However, it is this very majestic setting that lends itself to landslides and floods, which destroy the homes and livelihoods of those who call these hills home.

In June 2013, a cloudburst causing ongoing landslides, flooding, and drought devastated the communities surrounding the Mussoorie area. As one of the primary sources of healthcare and relief aid, LCH determined to quantify the vulnerability and resilience of the affected communities in order to help avoid complete devastation in the case of another natural disaster.

My role with LCH was to design a quantitative tool that would help to measure vulnerability and resilience, and to complete the analysis of the data upon collection.

With data from 300 surveys to enter, clean, and analyze, my work is not done yet. In these last few weeks, I am set to complete the analysis and work on an article for publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

Public Health Significance

LCH continues to serve Mussoorie and the greater community through all 10 Essential Public Health Services (ESPH). However, this practicum experience spent working with LCH is rooted primarily in research. The results of which will lead to several other avenues of the ESPH - such as to inform, educate and empower community members about factors that may reduce vulnerability and increase resilience to future natural disasters. Additionally, this research can help to develop policies and plans which would require local governments to institute a warning system and provide temporary shelter to devastated communities.
Public Health Significance

My practicum experience at DSHS afforded me the opportunity to work on issues related to several of the Ten Essential Public Health Services. At DSHS, I was able to research new insights and innovative solutions to chronic disease issues. I conducted extensive research and analysis of the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of evidence-based interventions focused on reducing health care service utilization and morbidity related to pediatric asthma.

As DSHS is a safety-net provider, it seeks to facilitate the improvement of population health in high-need, underserved areas. I learned about the evaluation of the accessibility of population-based services through their efforts to reduce potentially preventable hospitalizations. DSHS targets counties with high rates of potentially preventable hospitalizations for interventions to reduce those rates.

During the course of my practicum, I also saw the day-to-day process of the development of plans and policies that support community health.

Practicum Highlights

• Gaining an appreciation for the role of research in real-world state health reform.

• Obtaining a better understanding of the unique role of the state in improving population health.

“You may be surprised at how much there is to learn. Don’t be intimidated – embrace the experience.”

Map of Regional Healthcare Partnerships in Texas from Texas Health and Human Services.

Childhood Immunizations

Promotion and Education of Childhood Immunizations

By: MELISSA BUTLER

In Fall 2013, I spent my practicum shadowing the Infection Prevention (IP) team for St. David’s Georgetown Hospital and Heart Hospital of Austin. The Infection Prevention team works tirelessly to ensure accurate reporting of Hospital- Acquired Conditions as well as setting policies and procedures for screening and isolation.

One of the biggest challenges for the team is the ability to provide education for the front-line nursing staff. For my final product, I created a Healthstream course to help educate the front-line staff about childhood immunizations. The course focused on the importance of immunizations, facts about the immunizations needed for children aged 0-12 months and common parental concerns and how to address them. This course allows the nursing staff to openly communicate with new parents about the need for childhood immunizations.

Public Health Significance

- Monitor
  Each day the IP team looks through the patient admission diagnoses for potential Hospital Acquired Infections. They also look through all the Microbiology results for trends.

- Diagnose and investigate
  The cases for all possible Hospital Acquired Infections are investigated in detail. Also, any transmissible infections are investigated for risk of exposure.

- Inform, educate and empower
  Through Healthstream courses and inservices, staff are educated on handwashing and other health issues. My project has helped fill a void in this area in relation to immunizations.

Other Essential Services provided:

- Develop policies and plans
- Evaluate
- Research

Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Choose a community preceptor who has been in the profession for a long time as they share the most incredible and interesting stories.

Practicum Highlights

- Investigated Hospital- Acquired conditions.
- Investigated potential exposure risks from transmissible infections.
- Created educational material for front-line staff in regards to IP procedures and health issues.
Public Health Significance

Texas is currently experiencing a shortage of nurses. The demand for nurses is expected to grow as baby boomers get older and new healthcare reforms go into effect. The shortage has many effects, like nurses working longer hours, and it may also have a negative impact on patient outcomes.

CNWS provides several of the Essential Services of Public Health, especially assuring a competent public health and personal healthcare workforce, evaluating effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services, mobilizing community partnerships to identify and solve health problems, and developing policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts.

The purpose of the NEPIS is to assess workforce needs and respond by increasing nursing graduates. It gathers information on admissions, enrollment and graduation numbers, nursing program characteristics, and student and faculty demographics.

Addressing the Nursing Shortage through Education

By: Cate Campbell

I did my Practicum with the Center for Nursing Workforce Studies at the Texas Department of State Health Services here in Austin (CNWS). CNWS was created by the Texas legislature to collect data on and assess the effects of the nursing shortage in the state.

I was in charge of the 2013 Nursing Education Program Information Survey (NEPIS) for Vocational Nursing Programs.

My responsibilities included:
- testing the survey
- creating a tracking database for survey responses
- cleaning and verifying the survey data
- analyzing the survey data
- writing a report on the findings of the survey

The findings of the survey will be used to address issues that nursing schools face in retaining and graduating students.

Increasing nursing graduates could help alleviate the nursing shortage. Source: http://dlsii.com/blog/nursing-education-2/nursing-educationforinternationalstudents/

Advice for Future Students

- Keep an open mind when choosing/designing your practicum. You may stumble upon something and discover an area you never knew you were interested in.
Public Health Significance

During my practicum experience I was able to touch upon many essential public health services from research, to evaluation, and empowerment about health issues.

What I enjoyed most was informing, educating, and empowering people about health issues through creative workshops in a community center that integrated food, fun, social activities, and wellness all in one place. The API Wellness Center is far more than a health clinic that offers free HIV testing and stable housing for HIV+, homeless, and transgender patients, means having a community of people invested in providing a higher quality of life for those who need it the most. During my time at the APIWC I was involved in program evaluation, data analysis and most importantly connecting with other at-risk transgender people of color on a group and one-on-one level to build trust and to educate others in my community about whole body care.

Lessons Learned [OR] Advice for Future Students

• Practicums should be inspiring and can change the course of your entire life. Have conversations with people throughout your entire organization and discover what you can learn and bring to a project. You might actually uncover a new interest or be inspired to create an innovative new endeavor!
The Community Health Improvement Project (CHIP) is a public health initiative to improve many needed services in Austin, Texas. By improving access to primary and mental health, nutritional foods, and transportation, and by preventing chronic diseases, this programme intends to advance the essential amenities that the city has to offer for everyone. The purpose of the working group at the UT School of Public Health is to discover the areas of the city that don't have adequate access to public and active transportation routes. In the end, we created a comprehensive list of active transportation plans in our area to share with the relevant stakeholders in order to encourage them to align their future plans and intentions.

The new type bus for the MetroRapid program, set to begin early in 2014.


Public Health Significance

When people have adequate access to public transportation, regardless of their underlying demographics, they have the opportunity and tools necessary to be able to ensure their own physical and mental well-being. In order to achieve this, the Austin Regional Campus Working Group identified active transportation gaps (Active transportation is walking, biking, or riding the bus or rail-line) within the Austin City limits. The intent of this classification was to equip stakeholders to be able to inform the community partners (transportation providers) of the gaps. This will help bring the essential service of public transportation to the under-served, thereby "mobilizing community partnerships to identify and solve health problems."

In addition, public and active transportation are meant to connect individuals with the health services they need, such as primary and mental health providers, or just access to a grocery store. In those terms, this project will "link people to needed personal health services."

Occasions for Educational Advancement:

- Consulted with many transportation stakeholders, such as Capital Metro, the Austin Public works Department, and the Austin Health Department
- Gained Experience with ArcGIS - a program that enabled us to map and analyze disadvantaged areas

Go above and beyond the required effort - that is where applicable and useful work lives

ImagineAustin's growth Concept map, a 30-year plan by the City of Austin.

Source: http://www.austintexas.gov/department/our-plan-future
Supporting Breastfeeding in Safety-net Clinics

Developing a Protocol to Support Breastfeeding in Safety-net Clinics

By: Erin Moffitt

Breastfeeding provides short- and long-term health benefits to mothers and infants and economic benefits to families, employers, and society. Although rates of breastfeeding have improved over the last few decades, unacceptable racial/ethnic and socioeconomic disparities persist, and numerous barriers to breastfeeding remain. Through a federally funded Community Transformation Grant, the City of Austin’s Chronic Disease Prevention and Control Unit is addressing these barriers.

Objectives include implementing a breastfeeding protocol in three or more Travis County safety-net clinics to support more women to initiate and continue breastfeeding. My role as an intern was to help organize and facilitate monthly workgroup meetings involving representatives from local hospitals and clinics. I drafted a clinical protocol using existing guidelines from the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine and incorporated feedback from the workgroup. I also helped define outcome measures for future protocol evaluation.

The final products created were (1) a protocol outlining steps toward achieving a breastfeeding-supportive environment in a prenatal and/or postnatal clinical setting and (2) a formal policy stating the importance of supporting breastfeeding mothers in the clinical environment to be signed by participating organizations. Protocol implementation and pilot testing in safety-net clinics will begin on January 1st, 2014.

Public Health Significance

Development of a protocol to be adopted and implemented by local safety-net clinics required close partnership between healthcare representatives from hospitals, clinics, and other healthcare organizations. As part of a monthly workgroup, we engaged in information sharing, problem solving, and relationship building through invaluable meetings and communications. I quickly learned of the importance of the public health essential service of mobilization of community partnerships in making significant progress toward short and long-term health objectives.

(Right) The healthcare organizations participating in our workgroup.

Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Find a practicum that enables you to do what you are passionate about. If you can’t find a good match for your interests, create your own practicum experience.
- Talk to as many people, make connections, ask questions, have fun!
Health for Life is a biblically based health and fitness course implemented at Ecclesia Church in Austin, Texas. I developed, implemented, and refined the program specifics over the course of a semester. The Health for Life course links scripture to positive health behaviors, giving an emotional, spiritual, and scientific basis to behavior change. The health behaviors are delivered in a structure that allows changes to be implemented on a step-by-step basis. The step-by-step nature of implementation creates focus that allows changes to be more achievable and

**Pearl of Wisdom**

*Behavior change comes easiest when you can focus on one step at a time. Celebrating small accomplishments along the way allows for greater longterm fidelity.*

In developing Health for Life I looked at my own struggles with weight, the things I have subsequently learned about physical and emotional health that led me to lose weight, and what the bible and science had to say about matters of health. I also looked at a model that has experienced great success with a similar structure; only it exists for the world of personal finance. The program, called Financial Peace University, draws on group-based settings to enhance behavior change. The same model could be used for a weight loss and wellness program like Health for Life.

Unhealthy eating, lack of physical activity, and emotional stress are part of the typical American’s day-to-day life. Unfortunately, each of these factors contributes to the growing obesity epidemic (and its comorbidities) in the United States. Delivering my program before the church each week, I found that the group setting of the church allowed for strong re-enforcement of the ideas delivered that week. Church members were also more cognizant of the foods they were preparing and eating during extra-church gatherings. Using scripture to impart nutrition and physical activity information allowed church members to discuss ideas more easily through a shared vernacular and belief system. Making healthy changes permanent became an act of emotional and spiritual determination, not just an intellectual endeavor.
Omega-3 Fatty Acids and PSA

Association between Omega-3 Fatty Acids and serum Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA)  By: Mary Bassett

With the exception of skin cancer, prostate cancer (PC) is the most common form of cancer in men. Since inflammation is thought to contribute to the formation of most forms of cancer, the use of anti-inflammatory agents, such as Omega-3 fatty acids, have become an important focus of prostate cancer-prevention research. We conducted a cross-sectional analysis of men examined at the Cooper Clinic during the period from 2009 to 2013 in order to determine if Omega-3 fatty acids are associated with Prostate-Specific Antigen, a direct and specific biomarker for prostate cancer diagnosis.

Public Health Significance

The Cooper Institute promotes good health and fitness in children and adults with an emphasis on preventative medicine. With more than 1,800,000 person-years of observations, the Cooper Center Longitudinal Study (CCLS) is the most complete database on fitness measures in the world. The Public Health Essential Services that most closely relate to this Practicum include:

- Informing, educating, and empowering people about health issues.
- Research to discover new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.
Prenatal Breastfeeding Promotion Project

**Highlights**

- Monitoring of the first sites for the project in community Ob/Gyn clinics
- Ongoing grant writing revisions and submissions
- Developed database for analysis of project from surveys collected from site participants (expectant moms during first and last trimesters)

**Preliminary Results**

- 113 surveys collected from 2 sites
- 71/93 initial surveys indicated having information to make decision for breastfeeding
- 47/93 indicated benefit of physician support in making decision for breastfeeding
- 18/20 last trimester patients received information from physician during pregnancy
- 20/20 patients felt they had the needed info to prepare for breastfeeding
- 16/20 patients have chosen to breastfeed

**Breastfeeding Promotion to Address Childhood Obesity**

**By: Melanie Elliott**

The DFW Area Prenatal Breastfeeding Promotion Project is a grassroots initiative as part of the Be Our Voice campaign to reduce the incidence of childhood obesity. The project is endorsed by the Texas Pediatric Society (TPS) of which the primary project leader is a member on the Obesity committee.

The project was developed to provide direct training to Ob/Gyn physicians and staff to promote patient education regarding the health benefits of breastfeeding for both mom and the baby and promote informed decision making prior to delivery.

Simple surveys are administered to expectant moms during the first and last trimester to assess effectiveness of physician interactions.

I assisted in revisions of grant proposals and initial data analysis from completed surveys.

**Public Health Significance**

The DFW Area Prenatal Breastfeeding Promotion Project works to educate and empower community obstetricians on the benefits of prenatal breastfeeding counseling and the long term health benefits in reducing obesity rates.

This project addresses the Public Health Essential Service to “Inform, Educate and Empower people about health issues.”

The project is actively working in Ob/Gyn clinics to support physicians and their staff in providing the most up-to-date information and resources to their patients.

The project will continue to provide educational resources, ongoing support and data collection from patient surveys to determine the effectiveness of the training initiatives.

“I hope you will breastfeed — it’s the best thing for your baby and for your body” — phrase the participating physicians are trained to say to their patients.

Public Health Significance

This project is meant to diagnose and investigate health problems and hazards within the community. This is achieved by taking data on over 400 families regarding preschool readiness. Researchers are investigating how SES and race may influence preschool readiness. The researchers have been making home visits over a number of years to study the same families. They observe and record children's behavior based on a number of well-regarded tests amongst childhood development researchers. The end result is a massive amount of data, which can help pinpoint problems in preschool readiness.

Considering that self-regulation is one of the most important hallmarks of development, this project contributes to essential public health knowledge. Parents can learn to better equip their children if they know more about self-regulation. Also, public health experts can stage interventions if needed.

Dallas Preschool Readiness Project

In Dallas at the UT School of Public Health, I have been working on my practicum under Dr. Margaret Caughy. I am very interested in child/mother health and she teaches a wonderful class on that subject, so I approached her to see how I could help.

I'm helping with their Preschool Readiness Project to measure height and weight of children and to eventually link it to self regulation skills.

Creating a BMI protocol from scratch

Dr. Caughy requested I create a BMI protocol for measuring children's height and weight. BMI may be linked to self regulation skills and this data may help establish that link.

Don't be afraid to ask questions

Many professors have lots of projects going on at once. If this is your first experience in public health, you may not know what direction to go in. This is your practicum, take the initiative and don't just wait for direction. Ask questions when needed! Take charge and don't be afraid to make mistakes.

Creating and Piloting a BMI Protocol

By: Kathryn Martinez

They have been working on this project for a number of years now. My duties included helping with developing a BMI protocol and helping to pilot the program and obtain the necessary supplies.

My final product will be the protocol as well as some data from piloting the program.

Major findings will be available sometime in 2014 or later.
Medicine: The Sixth Discipline of Public Health

By Ryan Hassan

I did my practicum experience as part of my curriculum at the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine in El Paso (PLFSOM). The practicum included work with patients in the community as well as small group discussions and training in medical Spanish.

The purpose of our group discussions was to examine how different problems in public health related to individual patient encounters in medicine, and vice versa.

The time I spent with patients in the community was perhaps the most practical part of my practicum. I went to Montana Vista, a local colonia, and conducted a community survey to familiarize myself with the area.

I then returned to the community throughout the year to see patients at the local clinic, where I put my Spanish speaking ability and my medical and public health knowledge to work to address the varied needs of my patients.

The most relevant service I provided was to inform, educate, and empower the patients I saw, by taking the time to ensure that they understood their own health needs, and giving them the knowledge they needed to take control of their health.

The educators at PLFSOM know that good healthcare is about more than medical knowledge; it is also about working with patients and communities to address the many other factors that affect people’s health. Once we recognize that healthcare is a part of public health, we will begin to make the world a healthier place.

El Paso, where I have lived and worked throughout the course of my practicum experience.

Advice for Future Practicum Students

Don’t be afraid to take control. There were times when I hesitated to give my own advice to patients, or rushed through an encounter to stay on schedule. But patient care always comes first. You should always take the time to have open conversations with the people you are serving to make sure that they understand your choices, and allow them to provide their own input. Public health demands teamwork for success.

Practicum Highlights

- As one of our group discussion activities, we practiced the skills of motivational coaching by working with standardized patients, using the Transtheoretical model of behavior change. I was able to further develop these skills in the clinical setting on multiple occasions, by talking to patients about quitting smoking. Several of my patients agreed to start taking nicotine patches, and went home with prescriptions that day!

Public Health Significance

This practicum experience allowed me to help patients directly by working with them in the clinic to promote healthy lifestyle habits and develop personal health goals.

More importantly, however, it gave me hands-on experience integrating the goals of medicine with those of public health on the individual level. The skills I developed over the course of my practicum experience will help me to better serve patients and communities in the future.

My work allowed me to provide my patients with many of the ten Public Health Essential Services, but I think that...
HIV/STI Prevention

Practicum Highlights

- Working with the women on a weekly basis was most rewarding. They often shared personal stories of their lives and were appreciative of the education I provided to them.
- Hands-on experience and practice of motivational interviewing techniques.

Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Don’t procrastinate! Based on the objectives you and your preceptor agree upon, make sure to set a timeline for yourself so you’re not rushing at the last minute to analyze data or finalize your project.
- Get involved! The more involved you are in your practicum the more you learn!

Partner’s in Prevention: Women’s Edition

By: Samantha Culp

Working with the Texas Department of State Health Services, I was able to contribute to the field HIV/AIDS and STI prevention.

The approach taken was to provide an evidence based education intervention to high-risk, heterosexual women. The intervention selected was, Partners in Prevention-Women’s Edition (PIPWE). The intervention comprised of four sessions at one hour and a half each. Session topics included, relationships, HIV risk & knowledge, trigger management & problem solving, condom skills, and negotiation skills.

My duties during my practicum involved, researching evidence based interventions, creating/editing pre/post surveys, collecting, and entering data, and implementing the intervention.

The intervention was implemented at Volunteers of America (VOA), with the addiction treatment and recovery services program.

Results from the pre/post test showed, mastery of HIV/STI knowledge went from 56% at pre-test to 71% at post-test. To reach mastery, participants must score 80% or better on the knowledge test.

Public Health Significance

My practicum with the Texas Department of State Health Services incorporated key Public Health features. The primary Essential Service utilized was:

**Inform** participants of ways to reduce their risk for contracting HIV/STIs.

**Educate** participants about proper ways to use condoms and what HIV/STIs are.

*Picture retrieved from: [http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/hivstd/](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/hivstd/)*

Empower participants by building skills using role-plays and practice demonstrating female and male condoms on a model.

Evidence based interventions have been widely used in prevention efforts in the field of Public Health. Group interventions, such as PIPWE, have shown to have a positive affect in altering knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs of participants.

A woman, reunited with her children after completing the addiction treatment and recovery services program.

Source: [http://www.voatx.org/regions-served/san-antonio](http://www.voatx.org/regions-served/san-antonio)
Joint Trauma System Practicum

The Joint Trauma System-A System of Systems

By: Neil B. Davids, M.D.

The mission of the JTS is to improve trauma care delivery and patient outcomes using continuous performance improvement (PI) by continuous collection and analysis of data maintained in the DoD Trauma Registry.

During my time at the JTS, I worked on two projects. One was an analysis of a database for the use of blood transfusion by prehospital MEDEVAC (helicopter medical evacuation teams) in Afghanistan. The other project was a Process Improvement assessment of traumatic amputation and pelvic fractures to potentially change practices of prehospital providers.

The final product is an abstract presentation of the PI project at the special Operations Medical Association conference.

Public Health Significance

Of the 10 Public Health Essential Services that the JTS provides, the most applicable are developing policies and plans, evaluating effectiveness, and research.

As an example, the amputation/pelvic fracture relationship is an analysis of data provided through the trauma registry (research and evaluation), and the potential to develop clinical policies (in the JTS these are described as clinical practice guidelines) in order to maximize survival of trauma.

The JTS contributes to public health by serving as a government agency that collects and analyzes data from military trauma care and uses this unique environment of armed conflict to change how the civilian medical community responds to trauma. A proven example is how the civilian community has gone back to the use of tourniquets in extremity bleeding, which data accumulated from the JTS has proven to be effective.

Special events/ duties during your practicum

- Teleconference with DoD Health Affairs to change DoD policy
- Weekly conferences with the Joint Trauma System personnel in Afghanistan

Advice for Future Students

- Understand the administrative information that will be required to do the job you need to do, I could have done some more if I had gotten access earlier to information.
Public Health Significance

This practicum experience was an effort to decrease the prevalence of Early Childhood Caries (ECC) and to evaluate the strength of health literacy associated with the “First Dental Home” program. Dental caries has been identified as the single most common chronic childhood disease. As stated in my dental training, dental caries in the United States follows the “80/20 rule,” where 80% of caries are found in 20% of the population. This reflects the health inequalities and disparities referenced in the 2000 Surgeon General’s report.

The “First Dental Home” initiative presented an opportunity to monitor and prevent oral disease, identify risky behaviors that promote disease, and assure and evaluate dental practitioners’ communication skills.

Data collected from my practicum will help the UTHSCSA pre- and post-doctoral training programs to better equip future pediatric and general dentists to increase health literacy in the populations they serve.
Health Literacy in South Texas

Training Students to Better Serve the Underserved

By: Courtney Hobza

Frontera de Salud is an interdisciplinary community service learning organization composed of health professional students dedicated to providing access to medical care to underserved regions of South Texas.

The San Antonio chapter of Frontera de Salud coordinates more than 20 trips a year throughout South Texas. We perform blood pressure, glucose, and cholesterol checks in the community.

Since we provide students with the opportunity to become active in the South Texas community, my project centered on creating a basic training curriculum for Frontera students.

Based on discussion with the current student leadership, I created short 5-minute videos focused on the main areas that students will see: diabetes, hypertension, and cholesterol. Each video emphasizes the importance of health literacy and incorporates tips to effectively communicate lab readings.

I found that students felt that they lacked the necessary tools to effectively communicate so they were eager to learn about health literacy. The videos gave them the confidence to interact with the community.

Public Health Significance

Community health screenings are a vital component of secondary prevention. My project focused on maximizing our time in the community at health screenings by properly educating health professional students about the power of informing patients concerning their health issues.

The focus of the training was health literacy. Nearly 90 million people in the US have difficulty understanding and using health information. The degree to which a patient can obtain, process, and understand basic health information has been strongly linked to adherence and health outcome.

By training individuals on the importance of effectively communicating with community members, students can maximize the patient’s care during his or her time at a community health screening. Furthermore, increasing student awareness about public health issues early in his or her career will greatly benefit their standard of care in the future.

Lessons Learned

- The key to any successful project is constant collaboration with your mentor and community partner
- Set deadlines to keep project on track
- Feedback is a vital part of evaluation
Iron-Deficiency Anemia in Military Basic Trainees: designing a research study

Public Health Significance

This project will most significantly impact the following Essential Public Health Services:

1) Monitoring - once the research protocol is approved, we will be able to determine the prevalence of iron deficiency anemia (IDA) among Air Force basic trainees, as well as possible associations with physical performance and attrition.

2) Informing, educating & empowering - If the study finds significant associations between IDA and physical fitness and/or attrition, we will be able to inform the trainee leadership, trainees and military medical personnel about the training and medical implications.

3) Developing policies & plans - will be able to make recommendations for cost-effective screening, treatment and prevention of iron-deficiency anemia in the basic trainee setting based on research findings.

Learning the Institutional Review Board Process

By: Kathryn E. Myhre

I worked with the Lackland Air Force Base Trainee Health Surveillance Department to design a research project and submit a formal Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol proposal. Over the course of the practicum semester, I learned about the IRB process and research ethics, performed a detailed literature review of existing scientific knowledge regarding iron deficiency anemia and physical fitness performance, specifically amongst athletes and military trainees. I then applied the scientific review findings in designing a retrospective protocol to explore the impact of iron deficiency anemia on physical fitness performance and attrition in the Air Force basic trainee population. The protocol has been submitted to the IRB and is pending approval.

Advice for Future Students

- Anticipate that the IRB paperwork portion will take twice as long as you expect - get started on the individual forms as soon as you start your literature review!


Working with Trainee Health Surveillance

- Learn the steps of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Process
- Design a research project powered to influence future military and medical recommendations

Image from http://www.americanhealthjournal.com/anemia/help-for-anemia/
Healthcare in a town of Ethiopia

Allopathic vs Traditional Healthcare in Aleta Wondo
By: Elissa Prado

I traveled to Ethiopia last summer with Drs. Zink and Foster and seven medical students. The research portion of the trip consisted of developing and utilizing a survey in the town of Aleta Wondo. We interviewed different households on their usage of allopathic and traditional healthcare. By understanding their healthcare usage, our research organization hopes to be able to analyze the data in order to create a plan to help the community.

We collected data in groups taking turns using a translator to accomplish the task of asking over 50 questions. When we returned, we compiled our findings into the database for further analyzing. The results are still pending. However, throughout the interviews, I found that many of the residents do use herbal medication, the plants from their own back yard, to help with basic illnesses such as stomachaches and fevers. I also found that there was not a known traditional healer in town; however, a few locals mentioned there was one in a nearby town. To my surprise, most of the people I interviewed used allopathic care. The clinics were highly utilized for more severe illnesses such as malaria and severe diarrhea.

Public Health Significance

This opportunity was very unique in that not only were we able to help the community with a free clinic, we were also able to conduct a survey to see what kind of healthcare was used and what illnesses they rely on, allopathic versus traditional medicine.

While working in the clinics and researching in the field, we accomplished various public health services. During the clinics, we monitored health statuses by writing down the chief complaints of the patients as well as their vital signs. With this data, the next group will be able to return to Aleta Wondo with more medication for the most prevalent illnesses. We also utilized research to help us gain insight into the way the community uses allopathic versus traditional medicine using a survey and asking questions at randomly designated homes.

We mobilized community partnerships to identify health problems. When serving in the government clinics, we worked with the local nurses and student doctors to understand some of the local illnesses and most common issues faced in the community. We were also able to work with the community in Aleta Wondo and with previous UTHSCSA trip members to decide which tools and medications were most needed in the community.

Special Events during the Practicum

• We attended a celebration with traditional dancing and the ceremonial killing of a goat.
• During the surveys, we entered the residents homes and saw first hand how the people lived alongside their livestock.

Lessons Learned

• To serve a community or individual, you must truly understand where they come from, who they are as a people, and what their true needs are... because sometimes their needs are far different than what you initially thought...

Fall 2013 • Elissa Prado • Site: UTHSCSA • Allopathic vs Traditional Healthcare
Hypertension Awareness

Practicum Highlights

- Working with students from different professional schools
- Shadowing at the local HIV clinic and learning about the needs of this population

Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Make sure your practicum is well organized, be prepared for not only the work load but the traveling you will do in order to complete tasks

Hypertension Awareness in the HIV/AIDS Population

By: Natalia Rodriguez

An interprofessional team of students was formed to address hypertension awareness among the HIV/AIDS population in San Antonio, TX.

The team was tasked with creating educational tools (brochures, aides, a presentation) to help at-risk individuals better understand hypertension (high blood pressure).

The first task I helped out with was grant writing to try and get funding to create the tools.

The entire team will participate in all steps of the process, including grant writing, doing a needs assessment, and creating educational tools.

The project will continue into the spring and is projected to end in May 2014 when the tools are evaluated.

So far, the team has written a grant, and passed out pre-surveys to clients, physicians, and staff that will help decide what information should be included in the tools.

Creation of the tools should begin in December and continue into January.

Public Health Significance

Hypertension is a risk factor for heart disease, which is the number one cause of death in the HIV/AIDS population. The goal is to create educational tools that would help raise awareness among this population.

One public health service utilized in the project is informing, educating, and empowering the HIV/AIDS community on the topic of hypertension.

Another service used is Mobilizing community partnerships with physicians to identify problems with hypertension among clients through a pre/post survey.

A third service being employed is Assuring a competent public health and personal healthcare workforce that is well trained on hypertension and how to educate clients.

The last service applied is Evaluating effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services through a needs assessment, creation of educational tools, and data analysis.
For more information regarding The University of Texas School of Public Health, Office of Public Health Practice and the practicum program, please visit:

https://sph.uth.tmc.edu/practicum/