Public Health Practice

Stories from the Field
The University of Texas School of Public Health
Student Practicum Experiences
Fall 2014 – Management, Policy & Community Health
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 fifteenth-edition e-magazine showcases student practicum experiences throughout the Fall 2014 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: 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours per Week per Student</th>
<th>Approximately 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campuses (Houston)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Management, Policy & Community Health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Childhood Vaccine Hesitancy</td>
<td>Sarah Brooks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing Ionizing Radiation Exposure</td>
<td>Shireen Hayatgaibi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Planning and Budgeting</td>
<td>Sam Klotman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare Access = Healthy Living!</td>
<td>Sika Lawson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition Education &amp; Physical Activity</td>
<td>Ana Monterrey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Development &amp; Training</td>
<td>Majeedah Pacha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brighter Bites Photovoice Project</td>
<td>Margaret Raber</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vaccines are considered to be one of the 10 greatest public health achievements of the 20th century, yet there are still outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases. My practicum with Texas Children’s Hospital involved working with The Immunization Project to administer a survey on parental hesitancy towards childhood vaccines. This 27-question survey was offered to expectant parents at the Baylor College of Medicine OB/GYN clinic in the Texas Children’s Hospital Pavilion for Women. We enrolled more than 250 pregnant patients and co-parents of varying ages, ethnicities, and socioeconomic levels to gauge their beliefs about childhood vaccines. My deliverables included the scored surveys and having a related survey on childhood vaccines validated in Spanish for future use.

Public Health Significance

The Public Health Essential Services that most closely relate to my practicum are: #1 Monitor health status to identify community health problems; #2 Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community; AND #4 Mobilize community partnerships to identify and solve health problems.

The Immunization Project’s mission is to help Texas Children’s Hospital achieve its vision of committing to a community of healthy children through patient care, education and research. Immunization education is provided through a variety of outlets, including Texas Children’s blog, online videos and their book, Vaccine-Preventable Disease: The Forgotten Story, with supporting materials (see poster image above). First published in 2009 the book outlines the stories of 20 families whose lives were forever changed by vaccine preventable diseases.

Current literature suggests that vaccine hesitant parents are more likely to be persuaded to vaccinate their children than parents who are staunchly anti-vaccine if presented with accurate information, often in conversation with their healthcare provider. My practicum was designed to assess parental hesitancy towards vaccines at the Baylor OB/GYN clinic. The data from this study will be used to better understand vaccine attitudes and beliefs among expectant parents and help determine effective vaccine education. For information regarding The Immunization Project, or to for an online copy of Vaccine-Preventable Disease, visit http://www.texaschildrens.org/immunizationproject/.
Reducing Ionizing Radiation Exposure

Optimizing radiation dose reduction in the pediatric population using volumetric CT

By: Shireen Hayatghaibi

Wide use of CT scans exposes patients to ionizing radiation and increases the risk of developing cancer later in life. This is especially important in the pediatric population as they have a longer remaining life expectancy.

This project sought to reduce the radiation dose in CT scans.

I worked with radiologists, administrators, quality analysts and radiation safety officers to complete Phase I of the improvement project.

My duties consisted of:

- Collected baseline data consisting of over 1,000 CT cases over a 2-month period
- Developed database for the baseline information
- Met with Radiologists to develop unique indication list for radiation dose. Coded baseline data by indication
- Learned about quality and process improvement

Lessons Learned

- When navigating a project that involves multiple layers it is easy to get lost in the details, never lose sight of the outcome and purpose. For me this was reducing radiation dose for sick children.
- When managing a project, effective communication is key.

Public Health Significance

Among the essential public health services, my practicum aligns with evaluating effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services.

Reducing radiation dose has huge implications on patient lives. Texas Children’s Hospital is a high volume pediatric hospital. By implementing this quality improvement project, the hospital provides excellent care to patients in a safer manner.

Practicum Highlights

- Leaned how quality improvement is conducted at a major pediatric hospital.
- Managed a high impact project that involved physicians, administrators, safety officers and hospital staff.

Above logo taken from www.texaschildrens.org
Picture on left taken from www.polimaster.com
Financial Planning and Budgeting

An Overview of Financial Planning and Budgeting process of an Academic Health System
By: Sam Klotman

At the Baylor College of Medicine Financial Department, I was able to develop skills with regards to the financial planning and budgeting process of an academic medical center. Some skills that I acquired during my practicum included creating budget templates, learning about how medical service revenue is recognized, as well as how startup funds are provided to newly hired physicians.

The financial planning and budgeting process is essential for the onboarding of new physicians, who in turn serve the patient population. Dashboards were created for every physician, and included information regarding seed funding, budgeting by year, and status. I was tasked with creating these dashboards, as well as profile slides for newly on boarded physicians to be presented to various board members, as well as creating charts showing the allocation of funding across the entire Baylor College of Medicine.

Public Health Significance

Of the top 10 Public Health Essential Services, my practicum experience most closely relates to the evaluation, and assurance services. The financial department in BCM plays a direct role in the onboarding on quality and certified physicians. This in turn ensures patients of the Baylor College of Medicine that the physicians and health care workers that they are seeing are competent and qualified. During my project, I was responsible for compiling information regarding new physicians, which included their key interests, qualifications, as well as if they were certified physicians. The second essential public health service that my practicum site serves is evaluation. The financial department at the Baylor College of Medicine is tasked with making sure that physicians are meeting their projected RVU’s, as well as making sure that departments are being effective and smart with regards to their budgeting decisions. During my project, I was tasked with compiling RVU’s from various physicians, as well as reaching out to departments to ask about potential areas of concerns with their budgets.

Highlights of my Experience
- Participated in joint venture weekly meetings with St. Luke’s Medical Center
- Attended a Finance Workshop focused on enhancing understanding of basic financial concepts
- Created physician cards which were presented to the board of BCM
- Created dashboards for newly on boarded physicians

Advice for Students
- Never hesitate to look into a potential practicum that you do not think seems interesting at first, you never know!
- Network as much as possible! This skill is essential not only for success in your career, but can open the doors to numerous opportunities
- If you cannot find a practicum that interests you, don’t be afraid to create your own! After all, this is YOUR experience.

The Lee and Joe Jamail Specialty Care Center, which houses the BCM Financial Department.
Healthcare Access = Healthy Living!

Practicum Highlights

- Coordinating a convening event of directors and leaders of public safety, education, health, etc., throughout Harris County.
- Supporting the organization of community engagement activities such as Sunday Streets HTX and CHMI co-sponsoring TED MED event on UTSPH campus.
- Contributory writer of the CHMI Houston Blueprint for Action report.
- Working closely with Regional Director of CHMI- Harris County.

Advice for Future Practicum Student

- Be proactive and diligent in your work! Though it may seem like just another course to check off your list for graduation, this time is valuable to gain practical and relevant work/professional skills that can be applied to any field of work that you enter.
- In being proactive and diligent in your work, this may also catch the attention of supervisors/preceptors who would thus be more likely to hire you or recommend you highly for other positions!

Commitment to reducing the prevalence of common morbidities while improving the overall quality of life and health outcomes in Harris County, Houston, Texas.

From the Community, for the Community: Improving Health Outcomes in Harris County.

By: Sika A. Lawson

With my practicum, I had the pleasure I working closely with the CHMI Regional Director in engaging conversations and collaborative work with different health care and community stakeholders to help improve the state of health for residents in Harris County, by increasing the accessibility to resources. My duties with this internship were to conduct evidence-based research related to access to health care and the accessibility of public assistance programs for underserved groups within Harris County, Houston.

Public Health Significance

My practicum experience relates to the following Essential Services of Public Health: Mobilize and Develop Policies and Plans.

For instance, the goal of my project was to identify key stakeholders in the fields of education, public safety, environmental health, healthcare, etc., where I moved to connect people in top leadership positions in these organizations to help identify and work towards attainable solutions to help improve targeted health issues, primarily affecting residents of Harris County.

Alongside this, I conducted policy assessments surrounding current Texas health and Medicaid policies, in lieu of current public health problems and solutions, help to initiate local leadership discussions and collaborations among private and public sectors including corporate, governmental, healthcare, academic and non-profit divisions, and develop a working knowledge of public health policies surrounding access to care and current health care policies are resources in the state of Texas, and evaluating effective policies.

In addition to mobilizing efforts among leaders in Harris County, my project also entailed assisting with the development and planning of different healthy community initiatives. An example of a successful effort is Sunday Streets HTX, which allowed residents to walk 1+ miles on unobstructed roads during one Sunday over a 3-month period.

Outcomes:

- Established plan to reduce comorbidities in Harris County by 2020.
- Active involvement of leaders from various fields to contribute increasing access to care.
Doctors For Change’s Health Eating Active Living (HEAL) Committee works to prevent obesity and improve wellness for all Houstonians and Texans. I worked with the HEAL Committee on community outreach to Houston area schools for two projects: The Youth Art Contest and the School Wellness Toolkit.

DFC believes that by partnering with local schools we can work together to improve wellness for children in Houston. The School Wellness Toolkit focuses on enhancing nutrition education and physical activity during school. It consists of a listing of local and national programs campuses can adopt to help with these areas. I worked with HEAL to create an online version of the toolkit and prepare a presentation which we gave to schools to introduce the project. HEAL’s goal is to foster long-term relationships with these schools and provide support in implementing school wellness strategies.

The Youth Art Contest’s theme is “Celebrating a Healthy Mind and Body.” I led the project by contacting schools in the community to invite students to participate. They were asked to tell us what a healthy mind and body meant to them, by submitting artwork, creative writing, photography or video media.

**Public Health Significance**

- Almost 50% of children in Harris County are considered obese or overweight.
- Most youth are not meeting their daily requirements for physical activity or servings of fruits/vegetables.
- Since children spend more than half of their day at school, schools can play an important role in improving health.

**Essential Public Health Functions**

Inform, educate and empower • The Youth Art Contest encourages healthy lifestyle habits and gives youth a creative way to spread awareness about their importance. The School Wellness Toolkit empowers schools to make healthy changes and helps educate them about the resources available.

Mobilize • DFC is forming partnerships with local schools to identify opportunities to enhance wellness and improve the health of students and staff.
Organizational Development & Training

Development through Serving Others

By: Majeedah Pacha

My practicum experience took place in the Organizational Development and Training Department within Human Resources at Houston Methodist. The focus of my practicum revolved around different activities related to supporting, coaching, and training various Methodist employees.

Activities I immersed myself in included: orientations, leader assimilations, event planning, and analyzing group dynamics through personality assessments.

Under the guidance of senior OD consultants, I grew in the areas of facilitation and public speaking. My final project consisted of facilitating the entire first day of a New Employee Orientation as well as facilitating a group DISC session. The entire experience was amazing!

Public Health Significance

The OD department specifically meets the 5th and 8th essential public health services:

- (5) “Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts."
- (8) “Assure competent public and personal health care workforce.”

OD consultants support leaders, managers, and directors at all levels of the Methodist System.

Through new employee orientations, new leader assimilations and trainings, DISC sessions, individual/group Birkman debriefings, and talent management, OD consultants help improve workplace morale, cohesion, and productivity.

These activities contribute to creating not only a competent workforce but also a healthy and happy one as well.

Practicum Highlights

- I had the privilege of attending numerous Birkman debriefing sessions for various HMH leaders.
- I was selected to help plan a company wide Employee Education Fair at all the HM entities.

What’s Your Color?

- The Birkman personality assessment was really eye opening for me. I highly encourage all students in the professional field to take this assessment if the opportunity arises. You may be surprised by how accurate the results are!

Source: Birkman International, Inc.
Brighter Bites is a collaboration between UT SPH and the Houston Food Bank that delivers fresh produce to low-income families. The produce comes from the Food Bank and is delivered directly to schools for parents to pick up. Over 4,000 people are served in the Houston area by this 16-week program. Brighter Bites includes the mandatory implementation of CATCH (coordinated approach to child health) at participating schools and nutrition education for children and parents. My contribution to Brighter Bites was a photovoice project to evaluate the quality of their program. Photovoice is the use of documentary photography as qualitative data, traditionally used to empower and give a voice to disenfranchised groups. We are using photovoice to document the changes participants have experienced as a result of the implementation of Brighter Bites in their schools. The participants were parents of children at one of our HISD locations. We identified a funding source for this project and wrote a proposal outlining our approach and goals. Then, we submitted the necessary protocol and consent documentation to the UT Institutional Review Board and the HISD Research Office for review and approval. We recruited seven mothers from a local school to participate in the project. To date, we have consented these women, done the introductory session, had them take photos, checked in with them weekly and we had their photos developed. However, we have not yet had our second meeting with the participants in which we analyze the photos and look for themes. This will take place the second week of December and the exhibit will be in January.

Public Health Significance

This project is of important public health significance in two main ways. While usually used for needs assessment, photovoice here addresses the essential service of evaluation. On a micro level, the photovoice project should reveal to the program implementers how Brighter Bites is impacting families and what might be some areas for improvement in the program, functioning as a quality assessment tool. The photos will also be later used in a gallery setting, bringing public attention to the Brighter Bites project. On a macro level, using photovoice for quality assessment is a relatively novel idea. Therefore, the success of this project will indicate a new, effective method for researchers to gather qualitative data about ongoing program quality. This is a very important element of public health, especially with regard to community programming. While projects may be implemented as a result of careful planning and needs assessments, they must be dynamic as communities and attitudes change.
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/