

# Public Health Practice



## Stories from the Field

The University of Texas School of Public Health  
Student Practicum Experiences  
Spring 2013 – Dual Degree Programs

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 tenth-edition e-magazine showcases student practicum experiences throughout the Spring 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: 1

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Hours per Week per Student	Approximately 12
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Campuses (Houston)	1
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Student

## Dual Degree Programs

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Radiation Pneumonitis

Tommy Sheu

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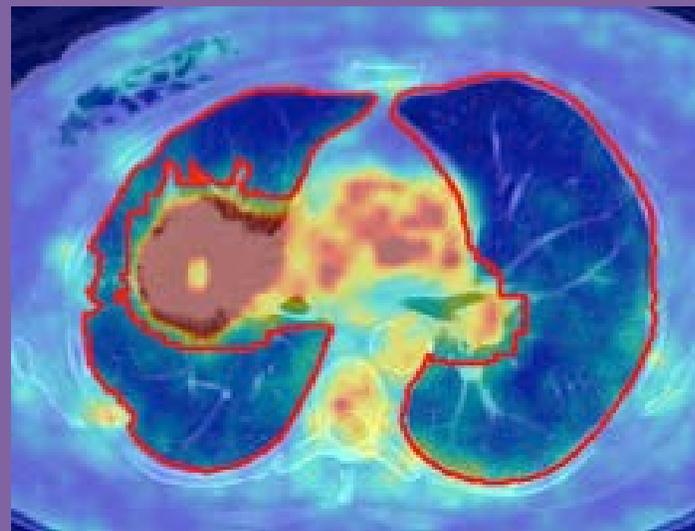
# Pre-Imaging Radiation Pneumonitis

## Practicum Highlights

- Working with and learning from the members of the lab who had a wide range of expertise.
- Meaningfully applying what I had learned in the classroom at SPH.

## Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Take every opportunity to learn from the people you are working with. This is a unique opportunity to build practical skillsets.
- Don't be afraid to expand your project with the knowledge/skills you've brought with you from SPH.



Axial PET-CT fusion image of a patient with lung cancer

Photo source: Tommy Sheu

## Is the risk of radiation pneumonitis hidden in this image?

By: Tommy Sheu

I had the opportunity to work on a translational research project with two faculty members in the Thoracic Section at MDACC—Dr. Gomez and Dr. Liao.

We were interested in looking at how information from PET-CT imaging—typically used for initial staging as well as for assessment of response to therapy—could be used to predict the development of radiation pneumonitis in thoracic cancer patients.

## Public Health Significance

Radiation pneumonitis is a dose-limiting toxicity in the treatment of thoracic cancers; however, not all patients who receive the same amount of radiation will go on to develop these symptoms.

The research I was involved in was a small part of a larger search for patient-specific variables that would allow us to identify these at-risk patients earlier in the treatment process, and perhaps even offer them customized treatments with the intention of reducing radiation-related toxicity.

For this project I worked with PET-CT fusion images, drawing regions of interest and using computer software to calculate statistics of interest about those regions. I then analyzed the results using time to event analysis.

I was fortunate to have the opportunity to present some of our findings at the Centennial Meeting of the Texas Radiological Society.

MDACC is a big place and there is a lot of public health-focused research and outreach! Although my project was more research-focused, the institution has many community programs. Among the more known public health services are: tobacco awareness programs for children, a mobile mammography van, and partnerships with local churches for cancer prevention programming.

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/>