

Public Health Practice



Stories from the Field

The University of Texas School of Public Health
Student Practicum Experiences
Spring 2013 – DrPH Students

Prevention diabetes safe kids clean water policy disaster
response cancer adolescent sexual health HIV/AIDS research
obesity alcohol empowerment vaccinations maternal & child
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 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: 6

Hours per Week per Student	Approximately 12
Campuses (Austin, Houston)	2
Division	3

Student

Epidemiology

Data Monitoring	Hycienth Ahaneku
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Health Promotion & Behavioral Sciences

Breast Cancer Survivorship	Pragati Gole
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Adolescent Sexual Health: It's Your Game – Family	Doan Ha
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Texas State Senate	Swapna Reddy
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Management, Policy & Community Health

Medicaid Reform	Charles Chima
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Breast Health Collaborative of Texas – Evaluation	Mudita Upadhyaya
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Data Monitoring and Reliability Check

By: Hycienth Ahaneku

I did my practicum in the department of symptom research at MD Anderson Cancer Center. I worked with my preceptor and clinical research coordinators to assess and ensure the quality of research data from research participants.

Specifically my duties were:

- Assess individual subject file
- Flag any file with erroneous data.
- Work with the research coordinator to correct any incorrect data
- Enter the data into the department's research tracking database

The data monitoring is an on-going process and so have no end product for now.

However, there is anecdotal evidence that there has been an improvement in the quality of research data from the department.



Hycienth Ahaneku doing some data monitoring

Practicum highlights

- Learned about the MD Anderson Symptom Inventory (MDASI). This is great tool for assessing symptoms among cancer patients.
- The MDASI can be modified and adapted for use for different type of cancer research.

Lessons Learned

- The quality of any research project depends on the quality and validity of the data. Thus invalid data may lead to erroneous interpretation.
- Essentially all aspects of a research project are important. But having a valid and accurate data.....that's priceless!

Public Health Significance

In 1994 the Public Health Steering Committee issues the Public Health in America statement which outlined 10 essential services of public health. At the center of these services is research. Cancer is a leading cause of mortality and morbidity in America today. MD Anderson is the leading cancer center in the world and is at the forefront of cutting edge research for various types of cancer. Treatment and care of cancer often result in symptoms that affect quality of life of the patients. Thus symptom research impact all types of cancer.

Ensuring the quality of research data has great public health significance as it provides impetus for making both clinical and public health decisions. Quality research data also provides for valid interpretation that can help the public make better decisions about their health.



mdabrandcentral.org

Thanks to Dr Mary Sailors and staff of Symptom Research for a great practicum experience and to Hycienth Ahaneku for sharing his picture for this e-magazine.

Health disparities in Cancer care



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
MD ANDERSON
CANCER CENTER
Making Cancer History®



Acknowledgement:

Dr. Abenaa M. Brewster, M.D., M.H.S.
(Associate Professor, Department of
Clinical Cancer Prevention, MDACC)

Special duties during my practicum

- Conduct literature review on the topic.
- Assist with writing a research proposal and get it approved from the MDA IRB.
- Abstract and clean the data from the BCMS database at MDACC
- Work with a team of researchers including faculty from MDACC and a statistician
- Conduct appropriate analysis and write a report for manuscript for publication

Lessons Learned

- Sitting in class and listening to a lecture is one thing, while actually applying our skills in research at a clinical setting is another experience.
- The best way to learn better is to practically apply our knowledge.
- Receiving excellent mentorship is very beneficial & highly influential for a student.

'Ethnic Disparities in Breast Cancer Survivorship Care'

By: Pragati Gole

Conducted a retrospective cohort study to understand disparities in breast cancer survivor women's adherence to surveillance mammogram and follow-up visits after completion of their initial treatment.

We also examined how their behavior affected their overall survival.

I worked under the guidance of my practicum preceptor, who is a faculty

at the Dept. of Clinical Cancer Prevention in MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, TX.

Final product of my practicum is a complete report on our study including an introduction with literature review, methods, results, tables for major findings, discussion and references.

We hope to further work on this report in order to receive a published article in Journal of Clinical Oncology this year.

Public Health Significance

In order to INFORM, EDUCATE, and EMPOWER people & those involved in health care about an important health concern (ethnic disparities in cancer care), my practicum experience RESEARCHED for new insights into this health problem.

My experienced focused on understanding how women's disparities in non-adherence to surveillance care after being diagnosed with breast cancer affected their overall survival

Our study will educate and provide specific recommendation not only to

physicians but also to all those women diagnosed with breast cancer in order to improve their adherence to cancer survivorship care after completion of their initial treatment, thus improving their overall survival and quality of life.



"Fight against breast cancer continues even after the treatment – which many are yet to realize"

Source for all pictures:
www.womenshealth.com,
Susan G Komen Breast Cancer
Foundation, MD Anderson Cancer Center,
& UT Health Science Center.

The IYG FAMILY

The project is to help youth make responsible decisions about relationships and sex and to help parents talk better with their child about relationships and sex

- For my practicum, I am involved in developing and implementing a computer-based comprehensive program named " IYG-Family: Beyond "The Talk" to Effective Pregnancy, STI, and HIV"
- The IYG program is an effective way to teach teens about their bodies, personal relationship, personal rules, and sex while providing necessary skills to grow into responsible adults and to improve youth-parent communication about relationship and sex
- The project site is the Center for Health Promotion and Prevention Research (CHPPR) at the University of Texas School of Public Health



A cartoon character in our game
Source: the IYG game

Through my practicum, I have learned about

- The importance in using technology for changing human behaviors.
- Leadership skills

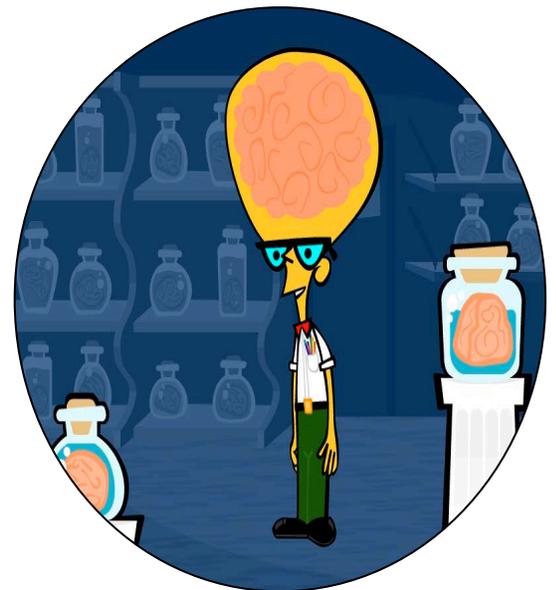
Lessons Learned for Future Practicum Students

- Always be motivated, participatory, friendly, helpful, and supportive

Public Health Significance

My practicum experience related to inform, educate, and empower youth to make responsible decision relationships and sex and to encourage and educate parents to communicate with their children about relationship and sex by using an innovative sex education curriculum based on a computer game

The study also will contribute to our understanding of using the Internet to deliver an HIV/STI, and pregnancy prevention program to middle school-aged students in home with involvement of parents



A cartoon character in our game
Source: the IYG game

Front Row Seat to Health Legislation!



Texas State Capitol
<http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/Home.aspx>

Making the Most of it!

Was really proud to be part of:

- Team that protected highly vulnerable children from being included in new TANF restrictions.
- Translate a constituent's family tragedy at Dallas hospital in to legislation increasing hospital accountability in Texas!

DOSE OF REALITY

- Don't enter this practicum assuming you will immediately develop incredible legislation to save the health of low-income Texans (I did!). Instead you will spend most of your time mitigating legislation with negative public health effects. It's ok! This is making a different too!

Semester with the Texas Senate: The Good, The Bad & The Ugly

By: Swapna Reddy

This spring semester, I had the opportunity to work during the Texas Legislative Session at the office of State Senator Royce West. I worked on all health legislation research and analysis assigned to the Health and Human Services Committee. It was an invaluable experience!

The Good: I was able to witness and in some cases, develop, health legislation from inception through the committee process.

The Bad: I worked heavily on mitigating provisions in certain bills that adversely affected public health. Specifically, bills requiring drug testing of TANF recipients, ending scoliosis testing of public school students and making it harder for low-income women to access women's health programs.

The Ugly: As I worked for a member in the minority political party, it was difficult to have bills heard or passed by committee. I saw the ugly side of extreme partisan politics in Texas!

Public Health Significance

The essential public health services addressed by this practicum were "mobilizing" and "developing policies and plans."

I participated in "mobilizing" by working with community advocates to refine legislation and recruit compelling individuals for public testimony in front of the Health and Human Services Committee.

The majority of my experience was in "developing policies and plans" by analyzing all health bills heard by the Committee through the lens of how

they would affect health access, care and improvement for low-income Texans.

I lent a strong voice in pointing out how legislation eliminating scoliosis testing at public schools would adversely affect uninsured children in Texas- this perspective was otherwise not considered by my office or the member who authored the bill.

Senator West's office in general provides a strong voice for minority and low-income health issues- particularly those affecting the Medicaid and uninsured populations. The Senator has consistently advocated for Medicaid expansion in Texas.



TX State Senator Royce West
<http://www.west.senate.state.tx.us>

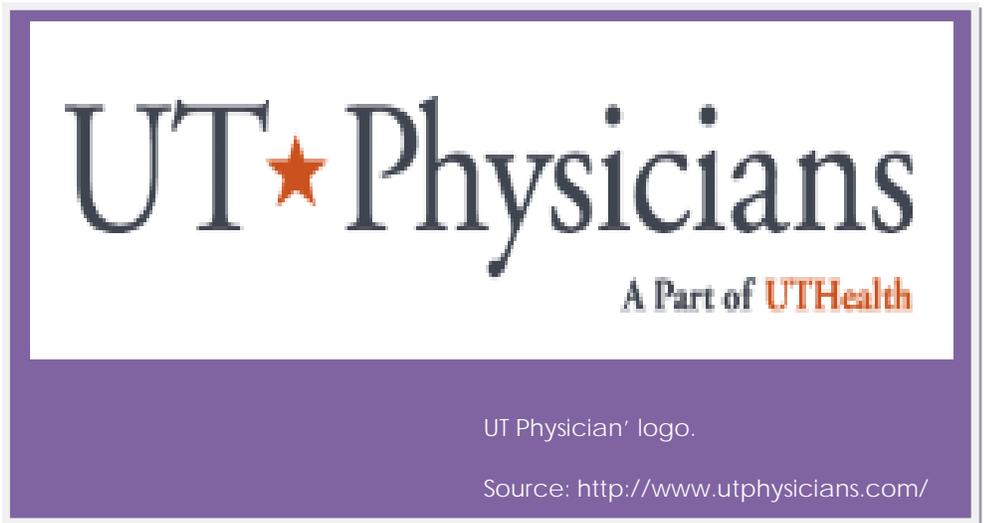
MEDICAID REFORM in TEXAS

Practicum Highlights

- Literature review for evidence to guide the planning, implementation and evaluation of healthcare projects
- Other project assistant responsibilities

Advice for future students

Time management is very critical; practicum can get so involving that without knowing it you begin to spend more time on it than you had planned for. This can negatively impact on other important aspects of your student life.



Real World Health Care Reform

By: CHARLES CHIMA

I worked as part of small team that is planning and overseeing the implementation of MEDICAID Delivery System Reform Incentive Payments (DSRIP) Program for the UT Physicians practice group. The DSRIP program is a massive statewide healthcare reform program focused on improving healthcare access and quality, and reducing health care costs for the poor and indigent population in Texas.

With regards to the DSRIP program, UT Physicians is implementing 23 projects, all of which are supervised by the project team that I worked with,

My duties included conducting literature and document reviews, developing process and outcome metrics for monitoring and evaluation of projects, and identification of data sources for evaluation of the proposed DSRIP projects.

Public Health Significance

My practicum experience related to many of the Essential Services of Public Health, most especially number 5: Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts, and number 7: Link people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable.

There are significant socioeconomic disparities in access to good quality health care in the US. The DSRIP program aims to address some of such disparities.

For instance, one of the projects we worked on involve the use of community health workers as care navigators to help minority and low income populations to navigate the maze of the complex health care system. This will include identifying barriers to compliance and adherence to therapy; information and education on recommended care; and identifying resources in community that will complement care that patients receive at the health care facility.

Evaluation of Breast Health Collaborative of Texas



Work in progress at practicum site for BHCT evaluation Study. In picture (L-R) Mudita Upadhyaya, Dr. Highfield, Dr. May

- Working with a large collaborative of 400 + members
- Using community based participatory approach to develop and implement the study
- Real world experience

Advice for Future Students

- Plan for contingencies, while interacting with the community, things may not go as planned!

A mixed methods approach to evaluating a large health collaborative By: Mudita Upadhyaya

The main goal of the study that I undertook as my practicum was to evaluate overall effectiveness of Breast Health Collaborative of Texas (BHCT).

BHCT's main office is situated in Houston, Texas. A mixed methodology approach was adopted to carry out the evaluation, which has an advantage of offering both quantitative and qualitative ways of disseminating results supported by and

developed with the community stakeholders.

Aggregated results of evaluation of the BHCT were presented to the BHCT administration and board for feedback and discussion.

Public Health Significance

The public health significance of the internship project that I worked on was to assess the effectiveness of a large collaborative in achieving its stated goals.

Mobilizing community partnerships is one of the 10 essential public health services. The challenge is to determine the best practices for measuring the effectiveness of large collaborations, such as Breast Health Collaborative of Texas, which is very diverse and multi disciplinary in its scope of services.

Evaluation of collaboration here becomes essential because it links the processes involved in the formation of collaboration to the ultimate outcome of collaboration.



Source: Breast Health Collaborative of Texas website. Retrieved from: <http://www.breasthealthcollaborativeof texas.org/>

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/>