Public Health Practice

Stories from the Field
The University of Texas School of Public Health
Student Practicum Experiences
Spring 2013 – Epidemiology
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: 17

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### Epidemiology

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Exercise for a Healthy Life

The Cooper Institute Highlights

- Actively participating in research at the country’s premier fitness/wellness research Center
- Interacting with the entire research team and learning the progression from idea to funded research to publishing
- Working in UTOPIA

Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Remember that the practicum is a learning experience, be open to learning from experts
- Get advice from your community preceptor about making the most of your experience - especially key people to connect with during your practicum experience.

Who, What, Where, When and Why... Exercise????

By: Kelly Abdellatif

In 2008 the Physical Fitness Guidelines were published. The guidelines recommend 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity, or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity physical activity. Using the Centers extensive database of fitness/health outcomes, the Cooper Research team is developing a grant to further quantify Exercise Dosage ➔ Health Outcomes.

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The final product I created was an evidence table of exercise/health outcome research since 2008.

My major finding is exercise does have measurable health benefits, but studies comparing the dosage still don’t exist. 150 minutes on one day or 30 minutes on 5 days, is the benefit significantly different?

The evidence table I created will be used in the grant application for funding a dosage study.

Public Health Significance

“Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems” - Public Health Essential Service #10

Diabetes, Cardiovascular Disease and Obesity related illness have replaced infectious disease as the leading killers. The Cooper Center is focused on treating this Public Health crisis with preventative medicine backed by solid research.

- The Cooper Institute provides researched answers to achieving health, longevity and quality of life.
- The Cooper Institute collects extensive health data (shared with other research institutions).
- The Cooper Clinic treats patients according to proven research (data source).
- The Cooper Fitness Center provides a place to exercise with trained professionals (data source).
Public Health Significance

The Public Health Essential Service(s) (PHES) that most closely relate to my practicum experience include monitoring health status, investigating health problems, informing and educating people about health issues, and researching for new insights and innovations. These services are specific to the foodborne team. But by learning about the different projects at the health department, I can safely say that the Houston Health Department encompasses all the services listed, and more. The foodborne and vaccine preventable disease departments work very hard to protect people from infectious diseases by trying to locate and contain the source of exposure. This was effectively seen in our surveillance of contacts who had exposure to the patient with measles.

Additionally, I am analyzing influenza data from the surveillance database. I am trying to determine if rate of influenza infection is different among gender and age group between the past three years.

Investigating Foodborne and Vaccine Preventable Diseases

By: Sophia Ali

The foodborne team at the Houston Health Department receives at least 15 reports daily of people infected with foodborne illnesses. My duty as an intern included tracking these patients, interviewing them, educating them on the disease, and collecting information that may be valuable for us to determine the source of the disease (such as a particular food, restaurant, or an index case). If a source is strongly implied, we send out inspection requests for the site.

Investigating Foodborne and Vaccine Preventable Diseases

By: Sophia Ali

The health department recently received a report of a patient infected with measles. Measles is a highly contagious infectious disease. To track and contain this disease, we are performing surveillance on all contacts who had exposure to the patient with measles.

Additionally, I am analyzing influenza data from the surveillance database. I am trying to determine if rate of influenza infection is different among gender and age group between the past three years.

Lessons Learned

If you are interning, especially for no pay, you have a lot of freedom to move around, talk to people, and figure out what you are most interested in. Take this opportunity to take initiative of your experience, and make it more than just the duties assigned to you.

Special events/ duties during your practicum

- Investigating, containing, and following-up with a measles outbreak
- Tracking, locating, and delivering inspection requests for implied restaurants/markets/etc. for foodborne disease

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

During a foodborne outbreak investigation, we must sometimes go out in the field and collect samples from patients who might be exposed. These samples are taken to our lab to determine if these patients are infected with the disease.
Autozygosity Mapping

Genome-wide Autozygosity Mapping in Left Ventricular Outflow Tract Obstruction (LVOTO)

By: Mahshid Sababi Azamian, M.D.

Left Ventricular Outflow Tract Obstruction (LVOTO) abnormalities involve underdevelopment of the main pumping chamber of the heart called the left ventricle, or its associated valves and vessels. It includes a spectrum of congenital heart defects such as Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome (HLHS), Aortic Stenosis (AS), Coarctation of Aorta (CO AO).

Many congenital heart defects are known to have a genetic link, causing heart problems to occur more often in certain families. This LVOTO genetics project is an ongoing longstanding project at BCM. The aim of this project is to identify the underlying genes and gene pathways that contribute to development of LVOTO. So far researchers at BCM have tried a variety of approaches including candidate gene, linkage, and genome wide approaches looking at structural copy number variants, common single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs), and rare sequence variants. In the Autozygosity project we use common SNPs to explore a recessive model of disease causation in this population.

Public Health Significance

Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) provides majority of essential PH services, such as monitoring health status, diagnosing/investigating, informing/educating/empowering, forming partnerships, linking to/providing care and needed services, assuring a competent PH workforce, and evaluating health outcomes.

Congenital heart defects are among the most common birth defects and are the leading cause of birth defect deaths.

In the Autozygosity project, we are trying to find genes/gene pathways that contribute to development of LVOTO. Finding the genes would help scientist to have a better understanding of the disease. Also knowing pattern of transmission would help clinicians to identify high risk families who can then be counseled. This could help to reduce the social and economic burden of congenital heart defects. Since prevention is a major public health principle, my project hopefully ultimately will improve public health.

Highlight of my practicum

I had the chance to work with research data of the patients that I have recruited myself. The highlight of my practicum is to see results of data that I have helped to collect by performing bioinformatic analysis.

My Advice for Future Practicum Students

What you do during the practicum is a real world experience; do not miss any opportunity to learn because none of it can be learned by reading a text book. Be organized and manage your time. Good luck!
Next-Generation Sequencing Identifies Genetic Variation Implicated in Chronic Disease

By: Angela Bhalla

My practicum focused on the genetic causes of chronic disease.

At the Human Genome Center applies next-generation sequencing of genomic or exomic DNA to reveal the genetic DNA variants contributing to chronic diseases.

I utilized data manipulation techniques in UNIX, PLINK, and R to create a specific file of annotated genotypic data from exome sequencing.

The final product from my practicum was creation of a database of next generation sequencing data annotated with the findings from the ENCODE project.

Public Health Significance

My practicum project contributed to the research aspect of the Essential Services of Public Health.

Identification of the genetic variants that are implicated in chronic disease will provide new insights into the prevention and control of chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.

Duties During my Practicum

- Learning to manipulate large genotypic data files
- Applying the findings from the ENCODE project to genetic variants

Lessons Learned

- Familiarity with PLINK, UNIX, Perl, or Python helps when analyzing and manipulating genotypic data sets.

The ENCODE project findings were published in a series of papers in September 2012.

http://playdna.wordpress.com/tag/junk-dna/

The Encyclopedia of DNA Elements catalogs the functional elements of the human genome.


http://www.genome.gov/
Make a Plan. Be Prepared.

By: Halley Cazort

I spent my practicum as an intern for the public health emergency preparedness (PHEP) division of Texas Department of State Health Services Region 6/5 South.

While working with PHEP, I was exposed to various aspects of emergency preparedness. I witnessed a Chempack sustainment visit and participated in two training exercises. I also assisted in updating security plans.

My final project was a report that summarized how federal Risk Based Funding grants were used by counties within the region to close the gaps between various hazards and mitigation plans. The grants were used to create programs such as a text messaging service to increase communication with the public and training sessions to better prepare volunteers on disaster response protocol.

Public Health Significance

After the attacks on 9/11, emergency preparedness became a priority for government agencies. Public Health emergencies include natural disasters, bioterrorism, and man-made disasters such as oil spills.

PHEP focuses on the plan development capability. PHEP personnel are constantly developing and updating plans to mitigate a variety of hazards ranging from an anthrax release to a category 5 hurricane. Training is an integral part of plan development. In order to ensure that a plan can be carried out successfully, PHEP staff train local officials and volunteers on the emergency protocols.

Partnership mobilization is another capability addressed by PHEP. Members at DSHS 6/5S act as liaisons between state officials and local health departments. DSHS 6/5S also acts as the local health department for counties that do not have one.

Practicum Highlights

- Served as an evaluator for SNS table top and functional exercises
- Attended a Mass Fatality Management Symposium

Advice for Future Students

- Don’t be afraid sign up for a practicum in an area you have little experience in. Your practicum is a great way to gain knowledge!
Dental Health

Preventive Dental Services to Third Graders

By: Jinhye Cha

I was involved in the Texas Basic Screening Survey (BSS) carried out by the Texas Department of State Health Services. BSS was initially designed to evaluate overall oral health status in 3rd graders and provide preventive dental services to those in need based on limited oral evaluation (LOE).

This practicum opportunity allowed me to learn and help in data collection process, data entry into the database, data quality assurance and finalizing quarterly reports.

Public Health Significance

This practicum experience is closely related to the essential services of public health. It effectively serves core functions of public health at the state level.

First of all, Basic Screening Survey (BSS) monitors the oral health status among third graders through limited oral evaluation (LOE). Once a staff dentist identifies oral health problems, the dental team provides dental sealants and applies fluoride varnish.

My primary duty at the central office located in Austin was to transfer paper-based data into electronic data for further analysis and reports. Occasionally, I was assigned to help a staff dentist and hygienist in conducting limited oral evaluation at elementary schools.

At the site, I helped to prepare the performance and record the results of limited oral evaluation as the staff dentist examined children’s teeth. This onsite data collection enabled me to understand statewide epidemiologic research and strengthen empirical public health skills at the state level.

These two preventive dental services link children to needed oral health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable.

Also, this statewide project, BSS, informs, educates and empowers people about health issues. The dental team records the results of LOE and delivers the diagnosed health problems and hazards to their parents.
Stem Cell Transplant and Fracture

Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplant and Fracture: A 15 year retrospective study.

By: Dhaval Desai

I worked at M. D. Anderson Cancer Institute, Department of General Internal Medicine.

Our study was a retrospective review of patients who underwent hematopoietic stem cell transplant over 15 years at M. D. Anderson Cancer Center.

Hematopoietic stem cell transplant is a mainstay treatment for many hematologic malignancies and for reconstitution of bone marrow.

We plan to see if the patients with stem cell transplant experience fractures.

My project was to gather and analyze data and find possible contributing factors such as age, gender and type of indications for the stem cell transplant.

Public Health Significance

Patients with stem cell transplant are subjected to rapid bone loss. They also are subject to medications such as steroid and other immunosuppression, causing further bone loss.

It is unknown if bone loss in stem cell transplant patients leads to fractures, which is associated with increased mortality and morbidity. Our study will provide information on fractures and add to the management of patients after their stem cell transplant.

Early screening and medications will reduce long term morbidity in these patients along with need of narcotics for pain management.

We are looking forward to find the prevalence of fractures, possible contributing factors in patients who received stem cell transplant and association between gender and fracture after transplant.

Practicum Highlights

- Literature review
- Data gathering, filtering and audit
- Interpretation and analysis of data
- Suggesting clinical implications, writing abstract and manuscript

Advice for Future Practicum Students

Please start finding practicum well in advance. It is important to find a study you are interested in. You will learn more than you expected.

Picture: Stem Cell

Source: http://www.unitedspinal.org/msscene/2009/05/06/stem-cell-

Spring 2013. Dhaval Desai. UT-MDACC. Stem Cell Transplant and Fracture
Data collection for HCHC

Developing a system to collect monthly data from EagleSoft and reporting to Dental advisory committee

By: Valay Desai

Houston Community Health Centers (HCHC) is an initiative for health of residents of Denver Harbor and other communities by providing accessible quality, primary health care in a compassionate and respectful manner regardless of ability to pay.

EagleSoft is a software used for entering the clinical history of the patients.

Public Health Significance

- Completing any clinical procedure is very important, be it clinical or medications
- Many patients are not aware of the dangers of not completing them, or the advantages of completing it.
- Through this system we can actually assess these trends and take steps so that they can be reduced
- This can lead to increase in dental care opportunities and access to it.

At HCHC dental clinic I was given the responsibility to develop a new system of recording data on the EHR of Eagle Soft.

So for that reason I had to constantly be in contact with their IT team and the company employee that made Eagle Soft.

Through out this course of time I feel that I became more confident in my skills as a leader.
Plasma Cell Leukemia

Impact of cytogenetic profile on prognosis and survival at MDACC

By: SURABHI KAUL

During Spring 2013, I worked on my practicum in the Dept. of Hematopathology at MD Anderson Cancer Center with Dr. Tariq Muzzafar. I worked on extracted clinically relevant data for our study on Plasma Cell Leukemia. We looked at the overall survival outcomes and the role of newer treatment regimens on improving the survival. We also characterized the cytogenetic features of this disease (PCL) and analyzed their impact on survival. Additionally, I assisted in designing a database for this study.

Public Health Significance

The outcomes of this practicum aim to fulfill the services 3 and 10 of the ten essential services of public health, viz. Inform, educate and empower people about health issues and Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.

Plasma cell leukemia (PCL) is a rare, highly aggressive plasma cell (PC) neoplasm that can present de novo (primary PCL) or as transformation of PC myeloma (secondary PCL). WHO criteria requires >2000/L or 20% plasma cells in peripheral blood. Overall median survival is 7 - 11 months. We aimed to characterize the cytogenetic features of this disease and analyze their impact on survival. 37 cases of PCL were retrieved from the files of our institution. Demographic, cytogenetic and survival data were collected. Karyotypes were available for 29 cases out of 37 cases. Nine patients were treated with hyper CVAD (cyclophosphamide, vincristine, doxorubicin and dexamethasone) and 12 with regimen including bortezomib. Overall median survival was 106 weeks. Cases with PCL in our cohort appear to have better survival as compared to patients reported in literature previously. Newer treatment regimens may be responsible for the improved prognosis.

Special Events

March 2013:

The study findings were presented at the United States and Canada Academy of Pathology (USCAP) annual conference in Baltimore, USA in March 2013.
Hepatitis B vaccine

Global Distribution of Chronic Hepatitis B Infection

Source: WHO

Response to a Test Dose of HBV vaccine

By: Chi Nguyen

For my practicum, I am involved in a research study, which evaluates anamnestic responses to a booster dose of HBV vaccine among U.S born teenagers.

Participants were recruited from the Texas Children Hospital. Teenagers who had the HBV primary series started within 7 days of birth (Group 1) or >4 weeks of age (Group 2) were enrolled. They had blood drawn at baseline and 13-15 days following the test dose to determine the pre and post levels of anti-HBsAg.

Findings: over 90% of adolescents born in the U.S. exhibited a seroprotective response to a test dose of HBV. Age at first dose, non-white race, and higher baseline anti-HBsAg levels were associated with more robust response to a test dose of HB vaccine.

The manuscript was submitted to Journal of Hepatology.

Public Health Significance

In 1991, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention initiated a comprehensive program for the elimination of Hepatitis B (HB) in the United States. As results, the incidence rates of HB are now very low in the United States. From 1990 to 2007, rates of HB declined from 82 to 1.5 cases per 100,000 populations. In order to assure continued decline in the rates of disease, it is important to determine the duration of protection provided by the vaccine.

Information from study examining duration of protection resulting from HBV in infancy using anamnestic response to boosting as the outcome variable could be used to inform vaccination policy both in the United States and around the world.

Lessons Learned for Future Students

- Always be motivated, creative and hard working.

The vaccine used in the study
Source: www.gsk.com/uk
Public Health Significance

Several public health services correlate with my work at LWI. My work on baseline health and water access surveys fulfills the essential public health service of monitoring health status to identify community health problems. These surveys will give LWI better data to decide what interventions to plan in a community including hygiene/sanitation instruction and infrastructure.

The other essential public health service that I worked on is evaluating the effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services in the baseline surveys. I also worked on the sustainability survey by working on sampling methodology for a reliability survey of existing wells to check how many of them are still functioning. LWI does not have data on all of the wells that they have drilled since their founding and they want to get a representative sample of their wells within each country to see what percentage are still functioning.

Improving tools for Monitoring and Evaluation

By: David Philpott

I worked with Living Water International (LWI) to help improve their Monitoring and Evaluation tools. LWI is an organization that seeks to increase access to clean water in the developing world, leading to improved health in the communities they work in.

LWI is moving from a primarily well-drilling model to a programmatic model based on the UN’s Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) program. Therefore, I worked on improving their baseline and follow-up household and school surveys using the skills learned in Field Research Methods in Epidemiology. These surveys are used to gather data on current water access and use patterns in communities. I also worked on moving the surveys into an electronic format usable on iPads. These improve scheduled will be pilot tested in the coming year.

Advice for Future Students

• Don’t be afraid to do something you are still learning! You’ll be surprised at the quality of what you can do!
Lessons Learned

This experience has been extremely eye-opening! I have learned a great deal about how people with disabilities live and how truly amazing these people can be. I have learned how to be appreciative, humble, and my perspective on life has changed for the better.

Memorable Events:

- Attended the Dallas Zoo with REACH's youth group!
- Created and presented a seminar on basic pet care. As an aspiring veterinarian, this was particularly rewarding for me.

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Physical Activity Opportunities for People with Disabilities

By: Jessica Pinckard

People with disabilities are less likely to engage in regular physical activity than people without disabilities. As a first-time intern at REACH, I was tasked with the project of determining what physical activity opportunities were available for REACH's customers in Dallas and surrounding areas.

I compiled a directory of recreation centers with contact information and hours of operation. This directory will be available on REACH's website so that consumers will have easy access to all pertinent information. I also wrote a brief that was published in REACH's newsletter, REACHing Out.

The results were a bit discouraging. Apart from the private centers that specialized in programs for people with disabilities, all but one recreation center (Bachman) catered to this population. Hopefully more programs will be created in the future!

Public Health Significance

In regards to the Essential Public Health Services, the ones most closely related to REACH and my project were to diagnose and investigate, inform, educate and empower, and link.

My project encouraged me to directly diagnose and investigate a health problem in community--not enough opportunities for people with disabilities to become physically active. After reviewing the results, they were published in two places which informed and educated REACH's consumers. REACH also informs, educates, and empowers its consumers by providing regular seminars on healthcare, housing, and advocacy. Both REACH and the results of the project linked consumers with personal health services. REACH's services include independent living skills training, youth outreach, assistive equipment loan, social/recreational activities, and disability awareness. All of these services promote healthy and happy living for people with disabilities.

Let's Get Physical!

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Hypertension and chronic kidney disease

Effect of blood pressure control in preventing progression of Chronic Kidney diseases

By: Divya Shanbhogue

I did my practicum at Renal Associates P A, San Antonio. This was a unique research experience for me. Research areas involving blood pressure and kidney diseases always interested me and was fortunate to get chance to do practicum in my interest subject. This research study (clinical study) was conducted in various countries including USA, Spain etc. Main research aim was to see if strict control of BP would decrease/prevent the reoccurrence of Sub cortical stroke. I was involved in the sub analysis of this research project that aimed to see if strict control of BP would decrease the progression of chronic kidney disease.

Public Health Significance

Chronic kidney disease is a major public health problem worldwide. This will gradually lead to End stage renal disease where filtration capacity of kidney drops to below 15 ml/min requiring either dialysis or kidney transplantation. Average life span of an individual once he is on dialysis is around 5 years. Chronically elevated blood pressure is a leading cause of chronic kidney disease in addition to causes such as diabetes. Every year thousands of patients land up with renal replacement therapy (either dialysis or kidney transplant) for end stage renal disease. Recently occurrence of chronic kidney disease has increased tremendously. This sub analysis of data has major public health significance since if these analyses show that stringent control of blood pressure prevents/decreases the progression of chronic kidney diseases then a lot of kidneys can be saved. Also, cadaveric kidneys can be used for more dreaded diseases like renal cancer, polycystic kidney diseases etc. I would be able to inform and educate people on the effect of hypertension on chronic kidney disease and will be able to develop policies to address this emerging public health problem.

Advice for Future Practicum Students

Choose practicum site and subject solely depending on your field of interest.
Never stop striving for advancement in public health!

Where there is public health there is always hope!

Special events/ duties during your practicum

This practicum experience was very unique for me because I have met people who have influenced me tremendously. I have learnt a lot both academically and personally. I know I have made friends for life. But highlight of this practicum experience was my nephrology attending’s patient care and attention to details besides getting to know Hispanic culture including some cooking!
Public Health Significance

CMML affects approximately 3 out of 100,000 individuals in the United States each year. Median survival of individuals diagnosed with CMML is from 12 to 24 months after the initiation of treatment. The diagnosis can only be confirmed after a patient has been monitored for a period of time with repeat lab tests to rule out other forms of myelodysplastic syndromes (MDS) and myeloproliferative neoplasms (MPNs). Newer diagnostic and prognostic criteria for CMML, based on cytogenetic and molecular data available nowadays, are needed.

The Public Health Essential Services addressed by my practicum are to Monitor health status to identify community health problems, Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community and Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems. This project will help decrease the burden of leukemia by early, accurate diagnosis and knowledge of prognosis of the disease thus helping develop more effective treatments.

Diagnostic and Prognostic criteria for CMMLs

By: Ashita Sinha

My practicum location was at the Department of Hematopathology, University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. I worked with my mentor Dr. Muzzafar on the study of CMML. The goal of the project was to identify the prognostic indicators, factors associated with development of CMML and develop newer diagnostic and prognostic criteria for Chronic Myelomonocytic Leukemia based on the molecular and cytogenetic data collected from the institution. My duties involved collection of data on all CMML patients diagnosed in the last two years, developing a database, conducting statistical analysis and writing an abstract. So far, there is an indication that certain treatments, drugs are associated with mutations observed in CMML but this is yet to be confirmed by final analysis.

Special events/duties during your practicum

- Extraction of data on CMML patients from the clinic station.
- Designing and managing database for the study.
- Gained in depth knowledge on myeloid neoplasm.

Advice for Future Students

Cancer is an epidemic which needs extensive research. Practicum gives us an opportunity to get a glimpse at this huge field of research. We all should utilize this opportunity to the fullest to make a difference.
The Project, “Texas Grow! Eat! Go!” By: Manisha Soni

The school-based project focuses on assessment of families, schools and environmental trends in nutritional diet and physical activity as an important step towards prevention and control of childhood obesity. The Texas Grow! Eat! Go! is a research initiative at the Michael and Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living and UTSPH Austin.

The Food Frequency Questionnaire (FFQ) has been administered for school children and parent information over food items consumed, serving size, amount and level of physical activity has been collected to evaluate the current health behavior. I performed data editing and data analysis work using SAS software.

Public Health Significance

According to 2007–2008 National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys, 16.9% of children and adolescents aged 2-19 years are obese (Ogden et al., 2012).

The American Diabetes Association states that obesity is the strongest risk factor for type 2 diabetes among children (ADA, 2000).

UTHealth partners on gardening initiative to fight childhood obesity

Trend Analysis in caloric intake and level of physical activity

- Instead of just focusing on nutrition values, offering both tasty and nutritious food can be more effective for children.
- While designing questionnaire, be stingy with the open-ended questions.

http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/stateprograms/fundedstates/texas.html

http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2013/feb
Determinants of HIV testing among high risk heterosexuals in Houston

By: Saurabh Talathi

The National HIV Behavioral Surveillance is a CDC is a cross-sectional study targeting male homosexuals (MSM), drug users (IVD) and the high-risk heterosexuals (HET). We worked with the second cycle of HET which included data through the years 2009-2011.

We used the RDS system to identify hidden population, which is a hallmark of the project.

Public Health Significance

Recent trends show that HIV incidence has remained stable over the past decade. In order to further reduce the prevalence of HIV, we need to understand the determinants of HIV testing among the high-risk populations.

Once the factors which impede HIV testing are identified, these should be addressed in order to increase testing. One of the many myths among the HET population is that they believe HIV testing is a part of routine health care. Such beliefs should be eliminated so that HIV testing increases.

Research has shown that knowing that one is HIV positive leads to an increased tendency to regular health care. There is an increased tendency to care for their loved ones and thus reduce transmission of HIV among them.

Thus, HIV testing should be increased in the future to reduce the prevalence of HIV.

Many people believe that HIV testing is included in routine health check-up. However, the reality is one is not tested for HIV unless one asks for it at a routine care. Further projects should be aimed to remove educate participants regarding this issue.

Practicum Highlights

- Determining the rate of HIV testing, HIV counseling among heterosexuals in the high-risk areas of the City of Houston.
- Identifying the demographic trends in HIV knowledge and HIV testing among the said population.

Public Health Significance

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Over the past five months, we carried out data verification and descriptive analysis.

I am in the process of creating a final report which will conglomerate all these descriptive statistics.

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HIV Infection in heterosexuals

HIV Behavioral Surveillance Among Heterosexuals at Risk of HIV Infection (Year-2006)
By: Zeina Ziade

According to CDC, more than one million people are living with HIV in the U.S. 20% of those people living with HIV do not know that they are infected.

In 2002, CDC funded states and local health departments to develop and implement a surveillance system called National HIV Behavioral Surveillance (NHBS) to monitor behaviors that place people at risk for HIV infection.

A large proportion of all HIV/ADS reported cases acquired through heterosexual contact.

Experts at the city of Houston department of epidemiology studied the demographic factors, sexual behaviors and HIV testing and prevention in Houston Texas year 2006.


Special events/duties/highlights during your practicum

- International Food festival from different nationalities at the city of Houston
- Food watching event for all the employees of the department

Lessons Learned

[OR] Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Ask questions as much as you can because you can learn a lot from the experts.

Public Health Significance

My practicum focuses on two of 10 essential public health services: Evaluate and Research. We analyzed the National HIV Behavioral Surveillance (NHBS) among heterosexuals to monitor behaviors that place people at risk for HIV infection in Houston Texas. A large proportion of all HIV/ADS reported cases acquired through heterosexual contact. My main work was to analyze the frequencies of many demographic factors, sexual behaviors and HIV testing and prevention of year 2006.

I learned a lot from this experience. I learned to work on SPSS program and generate all the data from this program. Cleaning, organizing and analyzing the data were the main purpose of this project where I applied most of the classrooms skills and met all the objectives of my learning contract. This experience will definitely help me in my future career.

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/