

# Public Health Practice



## Stories from the Field

The University of Texas School of Public Health

Student Practicum Experiences

Spring 2013 – Health Promotion & Behavioral Sciences

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 (Houston)	1
Division	1

---

Student

## Health Promotion & Behavioral Sciences

---

Worksite Health Promotion	Omotola Akintola
Diversity in Medical School	Adam Alomari
Community Transformation Initiative	Lowrell Bellard
Childhood Obesity	Celia Gaitz
Adherence to Follow-up Care – Pediatric Cancer Survivors	Gena Matthew
Corporate Wellness	Nimish Paripatyadar

---

# WORKSITE HEALTH PROMOTION



Overit Media employees performing their hourly exercise work breaks. Image© www.fastcompany.com

## Practicum Highlights

- I reviewed published literature of research instruments used in other worksite wellness programs, in order to help design our study questionnaire.

## Advice for Future Practicum Students

Through this practicum, I have gained valuable first-hand research experience, so it was definitely worth the time (plenty of it!) and effort. I also think it's important to do a practicum in one's area of interest so that you will be sure to enjoy it. Finally, prepare to watch yourself evolve into a well-rounded public health professional!

## Booster Break Stress Management Study

By: Omotola Akintola

The Booster Break Stress Management Study is a research project which is being conducted in collaboration with the University of Texas Employee Assistance Program (UTEAP).

The project focuses on the design, implementation and evaluation of short work breaks also known as 'Booster breaks'. This is aimed at reducing stress and sedentary behavior in the workplace. The rationale for this

initiative is the findings by research that, over 68% of UT employees were at risk for elevated stress (UTHSC Health Risk Assessment 2010). In addition, there are very few opportunities for employees to reduce 'sitting-time' while at work.

Amidst other duties, I am currently assisting my community preceptor- the assistant director of UTEAP- with various aspects of participant recruitment and data collection.

## Public Health Significance

UTEAP is primarily concerned with worksite wellness, and delivers a number of other public health services to UT employees and external clients. Some of these services include the following:

- To monitor the psychosocial and overall health of UT employees in order to identify and help solve any personal, emotional or family problems that may arise.
- To develop the right policies and

plans for optimal health in the workplace

- To link UT employees and their families to needed personal health services, as well as assure the best standards of healthcare.

These are a few components of the essential services of public health which the Booster Break Stress Management Study helps fulfill.



Taking a break at the work desk. Image copyright© www.glamour.com

# Fostering Diverse Environments



## TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER™ Paul L. Foster School of Medicine

THSC Logo, <http://www.ttuhs.c.edu/fostersom/diversity/>

### Diversity in Medical School (Texas Tech HSC)

By: Adam Alomari

The purpose of this research is to determine the diversity climate at the Paul L. Foster School of Medicine. My responsibilities include scheduling interviews/focus groups where participants will be asked questions related to experiences, thoughts, feeling and opinions about diversity. These transcripts will then be analyzed, coded and reviewed in order to identify recurring notions. The goal is to develop strategies & programs to

address needs and gaps identified as it relates to diversity.

Even though the practicum experience is coming to a conclusion, I am lucky enough to have the opportunity to work with the department throughout the summer. Unfortunately, results cannot be discussed until reviewed and published. With that said though, current findings suggest that there is a lack of diversity on campus and it will be addressed in our published paper by August 2013.

### Significance of Diversity

This experience related to several essential public health services, including:

- Diagnosing & Investigating
- Inform, educate & empower
- Develop policy & plans
- Evaluate
- Research

Since our department is in its infant stages of development, the institution is unaware of our mission.

By having conducting this process, we are not only promoting our cause but also informing. By conducting interview/group sessions on campus we are investigating & identifying gaps & differences that exist.

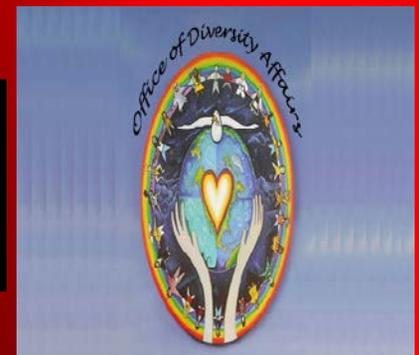
After a comprehensive evaluation and the publishing of our results, diversity practices & policies will be created & implemented with the aid and support of our Dean.

### Memorable Experiences

- Being able to give medical students a forum to express themselves comfortably.
- Learning the differences within diversity.
- Diverse backgrounds collaborating to achieve greatness.

### Words of Wisdom

- Have an open mind when choosing & beginning your practicum experience. The experience will impact different aspects of your life, adding a strength that will last with you. Best of luck!



Department Logo,  
<http://www.ttuhs.c.edu/fostersom/diversity/>

# Community Transformation Initiative

## Practicum Highlights

- Participated in a “Healthy Community Design Workshop” with guest speaker Mark Fenton
- Creating and editing content for the CTI webpage



Community Transformation Initiative artwork that can be found on all distributed material

Source:

<http://www.houstontx.gov/health/communitytransformation/index>

## Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Be sure to start looking for a practicum experience as soon as you can. Beginning your search early will allow you to find something that really interests you so that the experience is a rewarding one. You should leave your practicum with tools to progress in the Public Health field!

## Making Houston and Harris County a more livable city

By: **Lowrell Bellard**

My practicum experience took place at the City of Houston Department of Health and Human Services. I served as the communication intern for health planners working on a Community Transformation Initiative (CTI). CTI is a “movement” that is happening all across the nation to reduce rates of chronic disease amongst Americans. This reduction is done by implementing policies, providing preventive care and through environmental interventions.

My main responsibilities while working on CTI were to craft and edit CTI material, such as fact sheets, for distribution to current and potential stakeholders. Furthermore, I worked with internal and external entities to develop evaluation tools for capacity building activities. In addition, my final project was to research and develop content for the CTI webpage on the City of Houston’s website.

## Public Health Significance

My practicum experience allowed me to perform 2 out of the ten Essential Services of Public Health. The first was to develop policies and plans. CTI is more concerned about implementing policies throughout the City of Houston and Harris County that could help in the reduction of chronic disease to its residents. These types of policies include smoke-free college campuses or worksites and complete streets in certain areas.

The second service was research. A lot of what I did was research on ways that CTI could bring innovative ideas and policies to the forefront to improve health in the community. For instance, the idea of complete streets has been proposed by many different organizations in Houston. The idea of complete streets is to allow for all modes of transportation to be able to travel safely and to increase physical activity by walking and/or cycling.

# Childhood Obesity Prevention Houston



*Mustard Greens seeds prior to planting at Beauty's Garden in Independence Heights . Photo Courtesy of Celia Gaitz.*

## ***Special events/ duties during your practicum***

- Lyons Elementary Health Fair
- Pieces of the Puzzle: Childhood Obesity Conference
- Attend biweekly intern meetings and keep a weekly log of action items

## ***Lessons Learned [OR] Advice for Future Students***

- Take advantage of any opportunities your practicum site provides you with!
- Practice those Spanish skills or any other languages that are useful at your site.

## **CAN DO Houston: Avenues for Involvement**

**By: Celia Gaitz**

CAN DO Houston (CDH) stands for Children and Neighbors Defeat Obesity. CDH currently works in 5 neighborhoods in the Houston area using a Community Based Participatory Research approach. In Fifth Ward I started off collecting surveys from customers that came to our Mobile Produce Unit to purchase low cost fresh fruits and vegetables. I worked in the North side completing corner store

assessments, spark park observations at Lyons Elementary and helped with a garden build at Berry Elementary. I also attended GO Neighborhood meetings for the safety, culture and health teams. In Independence Heights, I attended collaborative meetings and workshops at the new Beauty's Garden. In Magnolia Park, I attended Zumba classes and helped to perform physical assessments for participants. Using Spanish is a plus, but not required.

## **Public Health Significance**

CDH relates to several of the Essential Services of Public Health. These include, inform, educate and empower people about health issues, mobilize community partnerships to identify and solve health problems and research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems. I also believe that CDH can relate to other services, it just depends on what type of project they are working on. The service of mobilizing community partnerships most closely relates to my

experience because the whole idea is to bring the resources to the community. We ask them what they need or are missing in their neighborhood and then we connect them with the resources. For example, Fifth Ward said they needed more accessibility to fresh fruits and vegetables so CDH found a local vendor to try out a mobile produce unit at a park. Also, once a corner store is chosen, CDH will use the local vendor to provide the produce and refrigeration at the location.



*Fresh produce for sale at Swiney Park in Fifth Ward. Photo courtesy of Celia Gaitz.*

# Adherence in Pediatric Cancer Survivors



Texas Children's Hospital- located in the medical center. Source: <http://www.mazgetti.com/index.php/expertise/view/140/>

## Highlights of practicum experience

- Interacting and learning from a multi-disciplinary research team
- Gaining experience conducting semi-structured phone interviews with patients and their caregivers

## Examining Barriers to Follow Up Care in Pediatric Cancer Survivors

By: Gena Mathew

The purpose of the Adherence Study conducted by Texas Children's Hospital is to provide a better understanding of what the barriers are for patients and their caregivers to continue their health care visits, and how to improve long term follow-up care for patients with childhood cancer.

The practicum site was at Texas Children's Hospital Clinical Cancer Center and Feigin Center.

My primary tasks as part of the research team included conducting semi-structured phone interviews with consented participants and their caregivers, qualitative coding of the interviews, and participating in the qualitative analyses of the interviews with the research team during the weekly meetings.

## Public Health Significance

The Public Health Essential Services that are most closely related to my practicum experience are "evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services" and "research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems."

Through the semi-structured phone interviews, we are able to assess the barriers and facilitators for patients and their care givers to continue to come back to Texas Children's Cancer

Center Clinic to receive their follow up care. This information can then be used to further improve the clinic in various ways in order to provide the follow up care that patients need, and to potentially set up intervention programs for pediatric cancer patient survivors and their families.

Ultimately, the results of this Adherence Study may be used to help investigators better understand what can be done to improve follow up care for pediatric cancer survivors.

## Advice for Future Students

- Utilize every opportunity your practicum offers in order to have the most educational and enriching practicum experience.



Logo of Texas Children's Hospital.

Source: <http://nursingfile.com/nursing-news/texas-childrens-hospital-virtual-open-house.html>

# Corporate Wellness and Workplace Healthcare



Practicum Site location:  
Abercrombie Building, Texas Medical Center.

Texas Children's images:  
<http://www.texaschildrens.org/Locate/Maps-and-Directions/Abercrombie-Building/>

## The Value of Worksite Wellness

By: **Nimish Paripatyadar**

My practicum experience primarily consisted of assisted the Texas Children's Hospital (TCH) Employee Health and Wellness Clinic with various activities planned (predominately with the Wellness team). This team focused on delivering various wellness services to TCH employees on-site in order to improve their overall health.

The main activities involved the development of an on-site fitness class program for TCH employees (collaborated with YMCA instructors), assisting in the development of a Diabetes Management Program, and creating the framework for a Fruits & Vegetables program for future use.

I also participated in stakeholder meetings to share our ideas with interested parties, and promotional events to increase awareness.

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
12:00 PM		Walk & Stretch Facilitator: Michael P. (12:00-12:30 PM)		Walk & Stretch Facilitator: Michael P. (12:00-12:30 PM)
1:00 PM		Walk & Stretch Facilitator: Michael P. (1:00-1:30 PM)		Walk & Stretch Facilitator: Michael P. (1:00-1:30 PM)
4:00 PM			Boot Camp Facilitator: Michael P. (4:00-4:30 PM)	
5:00 PM	Zumba Facilitator: Michael P. (5:00-5:30 PM)		Core Strength Facilitator: Michael P. (5:00-5:30 PM)	
5:30 PM		Yoga Facilitator: Michael P. (5:30-6:00 PM)	Night Club Cardio Facilitator: Michael P. (5:30-6:00 PM)	Zumba Facilitator: Michael P. (5:30-6:00 PM)
6:00 PM	Cardio Strength Interval Facilitator: Michael P. (6:00-6:30 PM)			
6:30 PM	Core Strength Facilitator: Michael P. (6:30-7:00 PM)			
7:00 PM				
7:30 PM				
8:00 PM	Zumba Facilitator: Michael P. (8:00-8:30 PM)			
8:30 PM				

- Above is the schedule of the fitness classes that were offered at TCH during Spring 2013.
- Classes were offered at each of TCH's main buildings (Meyer Building, Pavilion for Women, and Feigin Center). Various times were allocated to attend to the various work schedules at TCH.

## Public Health Significance

The wellness team at TCH is primarily focused on the following Essential Public Health services: **Assurance** and **Empowerment**.

These were accomplished through several types of events:

- **Diabetes Management Program:** Pilot program designed for diabetic TCH employees, which involves counseling from certified diabetes educators and registered dietitians. Program includes nutrition counseling, glucose monitoring tips, weight management, and exercise tips.
- **On-site Fitness Program:** This consisted of YMCA instructors conducting various fitness classes across TCH campuses (Boot Camp, Zumba, Night Club Cardio, Walking Club, etc.). TCH currently has no dedicated fitness center for employees on-site, so this was a well-received program.

The TCH wellness team strove to provide services to empower employees to make better choices in the future.

## Highlights from the Practicum

- Learning to develop worksite wellness programs from the ground up, from the middle, and from the end.
- Understanding the process to identify the necessary stakeholders, plan stakeholder meetings, and solve problems to implement programs.



This is a picture of a Zumba fitness class in progress—part of the On-site Fitness Class Program at TCH.

Texas Children's Hospital Images:  
(Only available through Connect portal on TCH information network)

## Advice for Future Practicum Students

Take time to learn about each practicum opportunity before committing—choosing one where you are invested and excited about the work will make the experience better!

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/>