Public Health Practice

Stories from the Field
The University of Texas School of Public Health
Student Practicum Experiences
Spring 2014 – Environmental & Occupational 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 thirteenth-edition e-magazine showcases student practicum experiences throughout the Spring 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: 4

<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>

**Environmental & Occupational Health**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal Workers Health and Safety</td>
<td>Ifeoma Ama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant and Temporary event Inspections</td>
<td>Jacob Harrison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Health and Safety at OSHA</td>
<td>Hope Hartwell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient Safety Orientation Module</td>
<td>Sumaira Zareef</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Informal Workers Health and Safety

Public Health Significance

Informal workers in the US have the highest injury rates and the least access to health and safety information. These workers include; construction workers, domestic workers, gardeners, landscapers and painters.

Studies have shown that a large percentage of informal workers possess smartphones and routinely use SMS and MMS technology in communication as well as social networking. Therefore, interventions to improve the health and safety of these workers can be implemented with the use of SMS and MMS technology as well as social media.

The aim of the project is to improve the health of informal workers by using the social media as an educational tool to send health-related messages to them, while monitoring the effectiveness of the intervention.

This is a form of community intervention where a high risk group is identified and public health interventions are adopted to improve the health conditions of the target population.

Accessible Health and Safety Information for Informal Workers

By: Ifeoma Ama

One of the goals of occupational medicine is to ensure that workers remain healthy by avoiding unsafe work practices. My practicum involved improving the health and safety of informal workers by providing accessible health and safety information to them.

The project involved creating a strategy to address the issue of deficient health and safety knowledge among this group of workers.

The central idea behind the project is to use social media that is accessible to these workers to deliver health and safety information to them. I was involved in creating a strategy to reach these workers by collaborating with public health professionals that are experts in community outreach. The final product was the creation of a grant proposal to seek the required funds for the project.

Lessons Learned [OR] Advice for Future Students

- Proper planning is a very useful skill in Public Health.
- You achieve a lot through collaboration with various public health and community professionals.
Lessons in Sanitation

By: Jacob Harrison

This spring I was fortunate enough to intern for the City of Houston- Health and Human Services, in the Bureau of Consumer Health Services. I assisted sanitarians and environmental inspectors conduct inspections and enforcements. These activities are done so that citizens and industries are able to maintain compliance with the city code of ordinances, and to protect the health and welfare of the citizens of Houston.

Public Health Significance

Primarily, I was involved in the routine inspections of food establishments and pools. Our duties were to monitor these establishments and enforce applicable laws if necessary. As public servants our duty is also to educate the public on food and pool safety, and how to stay in compliance and good health.

The activities of this bureau are some of the most important activities of the City of Houston.

I worked with all departments within the bureau. I was able to participate in daily and special activities of inspectors, investigators, and enforcers. I not only worked in the field, but also attended a conference for major polluters, and helped prepare a case to go to court. COHHS was more than happy to help me achieve all of my goals, and more. I received a well-rounded internship detailing what large urban bureau work consists of.

Many people are able to recognize and respect the contributions of the police and firefighters. Few however recognize the importance of a health inspector. These are the people that keep our food safe, our source of life. They are not greatly rewarded or admired for their noble work. Yet without them we would surely be in danger. I am grateful for them, and all that I learned. And, as a side note, I learned never look at a restaurant or festival the same way again!
Occupational Health and Safety at OSHA

Public Health Significance

Being that OSHA is a government agency centered primarily on the public safety and health of workers, it is not surprising that my practicum involved all of the Public Health Essential Services (PHES). Some of the PHES stuck out more than others. The main four that resonated throughout my experience were: monitor, diagnose/investigate, inform and enforce.

I would go out in the field often to aid with inspections that were taking place due to an employee complaint. During these inspections we would investigate the issue, monitor for any health and safety problems and diagnose the issue later. Once the issue was verified through adequate research, we would inform the company/facility of the problems and thereafter enforce them accordingly.

Industrial Hygiene from a Governmental Standpoint

By: Hope Hartwell

My practicum took place at the Houston South Area Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) office. The purpose of OSHA is to ensure the health and safety of employees are optimized by mitigating hazards which may be present.

During the practicum I participated in myriad of duties. I assisted with facility inspections where industrial hygiene monitoring was done for inorganic metals and noise. I assisted with conducting interviews to assess whether adequate safety knowledge was attained by employers and employees. I assisted with regulation research and ensuring accurate citations were administered as well.

I also was in charge of auditing the Safety and Health Management System (SHMS) Manual used by OSHA to protect the employees who work there.

Special events/duties during your practicum

• Assisted in a major investigation where willful violations were given.
• Personal monitoring for lead, hexavalent chromium, cadmium etc.

Lessons Learned

• Industrial Hygiene is a unique field which offers a wide array of opportunities. It is good to be well versed in several aspects of the field. There is always something new to learn and look forward to.

Spring 2014 • Hope Hartwell • Houston South Area OSHA Office • Occupational Health and Safety
According to the World Health Organization (WHO), "Patient safety is the absence of preventable harm to a patient during the process of health care."1

Public Health Significance:
1. One in 10 patients harmed in hospital settings in the developing world.
2. 1.4 million people suffer from hospital acquired infections in developing countries.
3. The proportion of reused syringes and needles without sterilization can be up to 70%.
4. Unsafe injections cause 1.3 million deaths.
5. More than 10 million people require surgical interventions every year.
6. Errors related to surgical safety are responsible for almost half of avoidable events that result in death or disability.2-3

USA Statistics:
1. 956 wrong site incidents were reported between 1995-2010 to the Joint commission.
2. 1.5 million Americans are affected by medication errors according to Institute of Medicine 2006 report.
3. One out of ten hospitalized patients in USA acquire hospital acquired infection.
4. 500,000 falls occur in US hospitals each year resulting in 150,000 injuries.3

References:
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/