Public Health Practice

Stories from the Field
The University of Texas School of Public Health
Student Practicum Experiences
Summer 2012 – Health Promotion & Behavioral Sciences
The practicum experience is an integral part of the MPH curriculum. 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 eighth-edition e-magazine showcases student practicum experiences throughout the Summer 2012 semester. (Prior semesters may be accessed through the Practicum e-Mag link, on the Office of Public Health Practice website.)
# Practicum Topics

**Serving Size:** 1 Practicum per Student  
**Servings per e-Magazine:** 17

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Supportive and Palliative Care

A Medical Student’s Experience in Palliative Care

By: Noor Alzarka

Palliative care (PC) embraces a holistic approach to medical treatment, focusing on supportive measures (pain and symptom management) in addition to curative goals for patients with life-threatening illnesses. The MD Anderson Cancer Center (MDA) provides PC in three settings: 1) mobile team; 2) PC outpatient clinic, treating higher functioning or independent patients; 3) PCU, which employs its own dedicated interdisciplinary team (IDT) and serves (in many senses) as a transition point for patients.

As a dual MD/MPH student, I followed physicians and fellows, in addition to other members of the IDT, as part of a 5-week summer preceptorship. I witnessed patients’ joys and tragedies and observed patients and their families struggling with Dr. Kübler-Ross’ five stages of grief (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance). Family meetings, facilitated by the IDT and a hallmark of the PCU’s excellent care, are particularly unique. They can be a touching opportunity for intimate conversation or a jarring experience marked by unforeseen revelations. Among the most unique aspects of PC are the IDT’s honed communication skills and finesse in managing the psychosocial factors that complicate each patient’s disease. This, sometimes more than medical treatment, often notably improves quality of life, even near the end of life.

Palliative Care & Public Health Significance

Total health spending in the U.S. accounts for over 17% of GDP. This spending is partially driven by overuse and misuse of diagnostic testing (e.g., imaging and screening tests). Furthermore, average Medicare spending on patients in their last year of life is over four times greater than the average spent on other beneficiaries.

At a time in which reigning in rising health care costs is a top national priority and in which comprehensive health reform has become a reality in the U.S., the relatively new field of palliative care (PC) provides a model for holistic care with promising implications for a fiscally responsible reduction in health spending.

In the PCU, treatment decisions are driven by potential effects on patient functioning and practical quality of life considerations rather than lab values. This helps minimize inappropriate and costly technology-driven diagnostic and screening tests. Outpatient symptom management reduces costly hospital readmissions. The interdisciplinary team holistically emphasizes emotional and spiritual healing in addition to physical care, even after curative goals become non-beneficial or futile. By communicating about and facilitating earlier transitions from curative to supportive treatment goals for such patients, PC seeks to enhance quality of life by minimizing unnecessary pain and medical costs that accompany non-beneficial care near the end of life.

Words of Wisdom

• When it appears there is nothing left to offer a patient, compassionate listening can be a powerful medicine.
• “I suspect that the most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen…When we listen, they know we care.”
  ~Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen

Daily PC Duties

- ESAS and MDAS are scales used systematically at bedside for every patient of PC at MDA. They allow consistent evaluation of disease- or opioid-induced symptoms and delirium, respectively.
- The PC Department promotes education and interdisciplinary discussions through daily didactic sessions. Team debriefings are emphasized and practiced (often daily) to prevent burnout.
- Psychosocial (in addition to medical) considerations are prioritized in the PCU.

Daily PC Duties

Physicians, fellows, nurses, a clinical pharmacist, a counselor, a chaplain, social workers, a case manager and volunteers are all members of the stellar PCU interdisciplinary team (IDT), all of whom contribute to each patient’s care.


References:
Developing a Specialized Volunteer Program

By: Kristin Busch

My practicum was with Legacy Community Health Services in their Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) Education Department. This department seeks to provide all-inclusive care through prevention, harm-reduction, remediation, and education. While volunteers are needed within the department, much of the information handled is confidential and requires specialized education.

To address this concern I conducted a series of needs assessments and developed an across-the-board volunteer training program for the department’s specialized needs. This program included: policies, comprehensive volunteer vetting and training process, facilitation training, and shadowing protocols.

Public Health Significance

My work at Legacy’s Community Health Services in their STI Education Department represented two main areas of the essential functions of Public Health.

Through creating protocols, conducting needs assessments, and structuring a complete volunteer program I addressed the essential Public Health function of: develop policies and plans.

An additional essential function that my program falls under is the inform, educate, and empower directive. This is due to two components:

Firstly, where the department staff is trained in facilitation techniques.

Secondly, within the STI education, department protocol, and preparedness training workshop for the volunteers.

These two major elements focus on educating and informing and thus fit within the third function.

Sustainability, planning for the future:

- Conducting a staff training to insure proper dissemination of the volunteer program.
- Insuring all project materials are distributed throughout the agency.

Utilize Resources

- Be aware of any trainings or workshops through which your agency can support continued education.
- Expand your learning scope by lending a hand in other projects not part of your defined practicum.
HIV Electronic Laboratory Reporting system

Practicum Highlights

- Analyzed survey results
- Visited lab and convinced them to join ELR.

You never know how things really work and what the factors of them are until you are in the field.

What’s Electronic Laboratory Reporting (ELR) system?

By: Yin-Yu Chen

Accurate and timely laboratory reporting is a critical component of HIV surveillance in Houston/Harris County. By Texas law, laboratory administrators and healthcare providers have the mandates to report cases who have or are suspected of having HIV/AIDS and STD. However, according to a lab survey last year from Houston Department of Health and Human Services (HDHHS), only seventy-two percent laboratories report positive test results within 7 days. HDHHS sets Electronic Laboratory Reporting (ELR) system to decrease the time and process that lab need for reporting.

My responsibility is to analyze the survey results, including the barriers of reporting, what kind of test each lab has, and if the lab is interested in ELR or not. I also learned the basic reporting process for HIV/AIDS and STD. HDHHS hopes to use survey report to convince more labs join ELR.

Why is reporting important?

HIV reporting is important to monitor disease burden and track changes. This can help us identify who needs patient care and referral services, and ensures that resources get to the people or communities that need them most. Reporting also help experts make “the map” which shows the rate of people living with HIV diagnoses.

72% of laboratories report HIV-related results to the Health Department (Houston HIV Surveillance-Evaluation of Laboratory Reporting in Houston/Harris County)

ELR helps HDHHS to collect right data information in short time, and HDHHS can provide this data to other organizations as their foundation for relative activities.
Public Health Significance

To Research New Insights to Health Problems
I researched the incidence of lymphedema in patients over the course of their post-operative cancer treatment to determine if there was a point that all patients should potentially be screened for lymphedema. The findings from this research will be presented and hopefully published so other physicians can effectively monitor patients.

To Diagnose and Investigate Health Problems
Patients who had increases in limb volumes were referred to physical therapy to have early treatment of their condition.

To Monitor Health Status
Patients were monitored for lymphedema from the point of surgery for 30 months following their operation to determine if melanoma is a significant cancer survivorship issue for patients with melanoma.

Lymphedema Incidence and Quality of Life in Melanoma Patients

By: Kate Cromwell

Lymphedema is a widely recognized treatment effect stemming from the surgical treatment of many different types of cancer. While lymphedema is widely studied among women with breast cancer, it is a known issue among patients with other solid tumor cancers such as melanoma.

My main project this summer was to help with all aspects of a clinical trial prospectively evaluating the incidence of lymphedema in melanoma patients. Prior to surgery, I approached patients and asked if they would participate. After obtaining consent, I measured patients using a bioimpedance device and perometer. Patients also filled out quality of life questionnaires and a symptom index to document any significant changes. I will be presenting preliminary results in an oral presentation at the National Lymphedema Network conference in September.

The Impedimed bioimpedance device used to measure patient limb volume in the melanoma clinic. Photograph courtesy of ImpediMed

Learn to be comfortable in many different settings. Each patient and each day provided a new challenge.
Public Health Significance

The essential public health services that were addressed the most through my practicum at Urban Harvest were: Inform, educate, and empower, and mobilize.

Informing educating and empowering students about healthy eating habits happened on a weekly basis and it was by far the most noticeable and rewarding aspect of working at Urban Harvest. To start with a group of children who had never tasted a peach before and then have them tell me about where peaches came from and how they grow, it was good to see how they were learning and that they were becoming excited about healthy foods.

Urban Harvest also provides classes for educators or anyone in the community who wants to learn about gardening and start their own gardens. They’re definitely making significant strides in helping to make Houston a healthier place to live and grow up.

More than just Teaching...

- Working with the kids and watching them become excited about nutrition and learning to grow fruits and vegetables
- I learned from other instructors about fruits and vegetables and the ways in which I can eat healthier.
- Experiencing my first Farmer’s Market!

“Have fun with the kids! The best days happened when I was excited about sharing new veggies or fruits with the kids, especially if I’d never tried them. Don’t be afraid that you won’t know an answer to a question, just look it up. My cell phone sometimes offered the best visuals. Enjoy yourself most of all!”

Youth Gardening at Elementary Schools in Houston through Urban harvest

By: Bethany Evans

This summer I worked at Urban Harvest as a Youth Education and Outreach Assistant. This department of Urban Harvest focuses on empowering youth with healthy nutrition through school gardening.

For the first half of the summer I worked with children at various elementary schools on growing and maintaining school gardens, as well as learning about fruits and vegetables to promote healthier lifestyle choices. The second half of the summer was devoted to outreach with gardens in the community and also working in an office setting.

The final product was a “Prezi” Presentation, which will be shared with the board and possibly uploaded to the Urban Harvest website. It compiled the lessons from throughout the school year and discussed ways that improvement to programs should occur.

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HIV Education at Thomas St. Health Center

Practicum Highlights

- Working with members of the clinic to create a “Before you go” card to help patient satisfaction and to collect patient opinions on the clinic. It was great to have a product I created circulating in the clinic!

- Being invited to the Women’s Support Group pot luck luncheon was such a wonderful experience. It was so fun to eat fried chicken and discuss the joys and hardships of being women!

Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Even though you want to bring a fresh perspective to your practicum site, do not forget to learn from the employees and public health professionals! They have worked in the field and have lots to teach about “real world” public health experiences!

Public Health Significance

This project greatly demonstrated the essential services of public health, but most importantly the service to inform, educate and empower the public on issues involving their health.

Since Thomas Street Health Center serves only an HIV positive population, it is very important that patients can access the correct information and care from this facility. From my conversations and observations at the clinic, the patients wanted a larger bank of information, and for information to be largely accessible.

I attended support groups, and observed the patients in the clinic, conducting informal interviews on how they felt about the clinic and their educational materials.

After talking to many patients, I assisted in a new committee for education formed at the clinic. New pamphlets were ordered and more widely distributed, opinion cards were made and placed visibly, and more support groups and classes will start later this month. I also created a “Before you go” card, so that patients can share their experience with management.

An environment needed to be fostered where patients could ask questions, and feel that they could be heard. By providing more of a wealth of information, each patient can feel like their unique needs are addressed. Also, by creating more support groups the patients can gain a greater empowerment from the knowledge that they are not alone in their stresses and worries. By increasing education, patients can greater understand their disease, and therefore realize the importance of medication adherence and care!
How does it feel to be low health literate? Imagine you are sitting in an exam room dressed only in a flimsy hospital gown feeling sick, stressed and anxious after waiting hours to be seen. In rushes your doctor who hands you a paper with the passage above and says, “Read this and let me know if you have any questions.”

Your naic is yhp has dednemmocer that you have a ypocsonoloc. Ypocsonoloc is a test for noloc recnac. It seolvni gnitresni a elbixelf gnweiv epocs into your mutce. You must drink a laiceps diuqil the thgin erofeb the noitanima to naelc out your noloc.

Literacy Coalition of Central Texas

How do you FEEL after reading the passage? Were you able to figure out what the passage was about and what it told you to do?

Reducing Preventable Hospital Readmissions through Health Literacy Interventions

By: Blanche Greene-Cramer

Low health literacy is a major public health epidemics, yet receives very little attention. My practicum was with the Literacy Coalition of Central Texas, one of the leaders in the area health literacy.

My primary project was working with Seton Family Health to develop a pilot research project evaluating the effectiveness of an innovative oral and written communication intervention on patient understanding and readmission rates among chronic heart failure patients. The intervention was tailored to meet the needs of Seton’s low health literate patient population as well as to be culturally relevant for the large Hispanic population affected by CHF.

In order to facilitate a smooth implementation and data collection process, we are waiting to find a co-PI within Seton before the intervention gets rolled out.

Public Health Significance

The Literacy Coalition’s Health Literacy Initiative addresses several essential public health services. They inform, educate, and empower people about the effect low health literacy has on health outcomes and empower individuals to be more informed consumers of health care. They mobilize community partnerships to address the issue of low health literacy from multiple perspectives. Through their trainings they help assure a competent workforce able to more effectively treat patients with low health literacy.

My practicum experience focused on the services of evaluation and research. The project I helped design was to evaluate the effectiveness of a communication intervention on patient outcomes and identify new ways of improving communication between patients and providers.

“Health literacy is the currency of success for everything we do in health, wellness and prevention.”

- Richard Carmona, 17th U.S. Surgeon General

Practicum Highlights:

- Participated in health literacy trainings for American Cancer Society and Seton Healthcare Family

- Helped develop a research proposal for a collaborative project with Seton Healthcare Family

- Created a database of resources on health literacy interventions

Social Media Health Revolution in Travis County

By: ERIC IKONNE

I performed data collection regarding African American health disparities in Travis County. I attended a health transformation project meeting in late July to discuss positive changes to the environment with residents in Travis County.

The Alliance creates workshops and health projects in an effort to educate the African American community. Also, they work to bring the community together to promote healthier lifestyles in the African American community.

I was in charge of jump starting the Twitter account for the Alliance. I found organizations that the Alliance could follow and created messages that we could post on our Twitter account.

My final product is an analysis of the findings regarding the critical indicators report and a summary of the Health Survey that was handed out at the various workshops.

African Americans in Travis County have higher mortality rates of chronic diseases compared to Hispanics/Latinos and Non-Hispanic Whites.

I monitored the health status of the African American community in Travis County by analyzing their excess mortality rates. I compared their mortality death rates to the Hispanic/Latino and White Non-Hispanic populations to discover how many excess deaths the African American community was experiencing.

The Alliance for African American Health in Central Texas contributes to Public Health by educating African Americans in Travis County about ways to improve their health status by making choices in their community and in their households.

The Alliance accomplishes this by creating workshops and health initiatives that promote healthier lifestyles. In the past they have conducted 5k run/walks and proving information about diabetes awareness and breast cancer.
Uncovering the Perceptions of Burmese Refugees on Prenatal Care in America

My goal this summer was to better understand the pregnancy experiences of Burmese refugees resettled in Austin, Texas and suggest ways for Refugee Services of Texas (RST) to enhance their services for pregnant clients originally from Burma.

Little is known about their birthing preferences and how US healthcare workers can address their needs, so providing qualitative data on this population’s perspective provides a much-needed baseline to improve services.

I partnered with an influential, Burmese-speaking translator to conduct a 60 minute focus group at her apartment complex with 9 Burmese women.

Concern with Medicaid coverage was the most important issue expressed, so I am recommending that RST trains a Burmese interpreter to host four workshops each year on Pregnancy Medicaid enrollment and other sources of low-cost prenatal care.

Public Health Significance

Beyond cultural and language barriers, uncertainties about Medicaid delay the onset of prenatal care and important screenings, so stakeholders interested in refugee health should prioritize this challenge among Burmese women.

My practicum reflects the public health essential service of evaluating how present healthcare services are perceived by Burmese refugees and researching for solutions to address their concerns on Medicaid coverage. Unless local agencies address this concern, many Burmese women will not access prenatal care until their delivery or third trimester.

RST case workers aggressively assist clients in applying to federal programs upon arrival, but greater efforts in applying to Pregnancy Medicaid and other low-cost options are necessary to address the concerns of pregnant Burmese women. I hope that more focus groups will be done to validate this recommendation of establishing a community workshop that facilitates accessible prenatal care among refugee women from Buma.
Teaching Health Education to Adults with Down Syndrome

By: Lacy LaGrone

I had the privilege of spending the summer teaching with the Education for Life (E4L) program at the Down Syndrome Association of Houston (DSAH). E4L is a post-high school education program for adults with Down Syndrome with 32 adult learners currently enrolled.

Several weeks of this summer were spent teaching and learning about safety and emergencies, nutrition, and physical activity.

Role play activities and hands on practice were used to learn about calling 9-1-1, nutrition and portion control, and the importance of stretching and exercise.

This summer the students participated in activities such as touring a fire truck, going on a field trip to the Houston Health Museum, and having a potluck banquet of foods from around the world.

Public Health Significance

The Down Syndrome Association and this internship gave me the opportunity to address the public health essential service of informing, educating, and empowering people about health issues. This service is especially important with a vulnerable population such as adults with Down Syndrome.

It was such a wonderful experience to be able to work with 32 adults with Down Syndrome all summer! This experience taught me that different populations require different methods, there is no one way to do it.

Not only was I able to teach health issues to those with Down Syndrome, but I was able to participate in awareness events to educate the public on Down Syndrome.

This has definitely been a learning experience and one I will never forget!

I appreciate the Down Syndrome Association having me this summer and allowing me to learn so much from their organization.

Lessons Learned

Flexibility is vital in small non-profit organizations, and even more so when working with special needs. Wearing multiple “hats” and taking on many different job descriptions, from teacher to maintenance to trash removal extraordinaire, is a daily occurrence.

Practicum Highlights

- Taught 32 adults with Down Syndrome safety, nutrition, and physical education
- Participated in field trips, annual Lemonade day, DSAH Pantomime Troup performances, and fundraisers!
My final product from this practicum experience will be my culminating experience thesis paper. My thesis will explore how parent weight status and adiposity affects the way parents model eating behaviors to their children. My thesis will be completed in Fall 2012.

### Public Health Significance

Understanding why certain public health problems arise and persist is crucial to working in the field of public health, as this knowledge lends to the reversal of damaging health trends. Assessment, one of the core functions of public health, is a means to developing this understanding. In assessment, it is important to explore health deficiencies in communities, investigate the occurrence of these health problems, and examine their determinants. These objectives can be achieved through the collection, analysis, and sharing of health data.

During my practicum, I analyzed data collected in various studies and also assisted the research team in collecting new data. Data analysis and collection is important for public health because careful analysis of data can provide important evidence to solve public health issues and prevent their future occurrence. I believe this work is important to the big picture of public health because as obesity rates are rising, it is important to assess how and why obesity rates are so high. Obesity can track from generation to generation, and I hope the work I did during my practicum will increase the understanding of why this is so and what can be done to reverse this trend.

### How research can provide insight

**By: Sarah Masood**

This summer, I worked at the Healthy Development Project at the School of Brain and Behavioral Sciences at UTDallas.

I mainly focused on behaviors related to the development of child obesity, including self-regulation. Researchers in this lab are addressing this issue through research, which I feel will provide valuable information regarding why child obesity is such a prevalent and worsening problem today among children.

I was responsible for helping the lab with data collection/analysis and developing ideas about studies being carried out in the lab.

### Highlights

- Worked with already collected data – analyzed for determination of important factors which lead to child obesity
- Collected data for ongoing studies

### Lessons learned/Advice for future students

- Be proactive! Ask what you can do to help. The more you ask, the more you learn!
- Think about what practicum best fits you. Now only in the experience invaluable, the people you meet at your practicum can be very helpful for your future career.

A family eating dinner together. Retrieved from:
http://blog.aletoys.com/2010/01/06/ask-nurit-making-family-meals-work/
EFNEP FACTS:
- Over 1,500 families enrolled in Dallas County
- 88% of adult participants improved in one or more nutrition practices
- 95% of youth participants improved physical activity behavior or attitude
- For every $1 spent on EFNEP, $10 are saved in healthcare costs and $2 are saved in food costs by participants.

Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program

About EFNEP
EFNEP’s adult program purpose and mission is reach out to limited resource families to provide food and nutrition education. Nutrition education consists of a six lesson series and include food demonstrations and tasting. Lesson topics include my plate, stretching food dollars, improving eating habits, and practicing food safety.

The youth program reaches out to low-income youth aged 6-12. Students participate in educational and interactive lessons.

Other tasks included:
- Developed a youth curriculum
- Created a resource book for youth hands-on lessons
- Created a food safety handbook for the staff
- Created a resource list for possible groups to be recruited
- Created a survey for program liaisons
- Checked adult paperwork for completeness
- Observed educators during classes
- Created marketing materials
- Translated 24-hour food recalls in Spanish

Public Health Significance

Essential public health services EFNEP works towards includes informing, educating, and empowering the community, assuring a competent workforce, and evaluating the program.

EFNEP nutrition educators go to various community sites, normally once a week for six weeks, to teach about nutrition.

EFNEP regularly trains employees and has teaching protocols to make sure the nutrition educators are delivering correct and accurate information. This ensures a competent workforce.

Food behavior changes such as food practices and knowledge are measured to ensure the program’s effectiveness and cost-benefit.

My project contributes to public health because it informs and educates the community about the benefits of physical activity among youths. It also empowers the community by providing resources for physical activity.
Public Health Significance

Six out of the ten Essential Public Health Services were performed throughout the duration of my practicum. The most prominent of the group was mobilizing various departments that play a role in student’s health and well-being.

The Center for Career Development, the Counseling Center, and the Residence Life departments at Rice University all played a vital role in identifying weaknesses in students stress management skills.

All three departments noted that Rice students do not handle conflict well. For this reason, the formation of the Let’s Talk curriculum began with building conflict resolution skills. The resources used to build the outline provided an assessment to pinpoint individual conflict resolution styles and tools to help enhance the positive aspects of such styles. Active listening, assertive communication, and a comprehensive conflict resolution process were included in the teaching material.

Student Emotional Well-Being

Taking a Moment for Mindfulness, Resiliency, and Coping Strategies

By: Dinah J Pena

The mental health status of Rice University’s undergraduate and graduate population was a concern among faculty and staff. Take a Moment: An Emotional Well-Being Assessment was created to identify the student population’s skill set in the areas of mindfulness, resiliency, coping strategies. Once data has been collected, established programs within the center will be retooled to address stress management.

The Let’s Talk program curriculum received the most attention. Bi-weekly sessions discussing various topics such as communication and conflict resolution, Let’s Talk serves as a student resource to manage issues typically faced at the college level.

Both projects are designed to link students with effective resources that will increase positive emotional well-being.

I DID IT!! I REALLY DID IT!!

- One highlight during my practicum was presenting my work to the coordinators of the Wellness Center and receiving positive feedback on the assessment and curriculum I created.

- The second highlight was receiving IRB protocol approval from the research committee for the Take A Moment: An Emotional Well-Being Assessment. Waiting on the research committee for approval was nerve wrecking to say the least.

• Take advantage of the networking opportunities at your practicum site. Building a positive rapport with members of your organization WILL benefit you in the short and long run.
Health Behaviors of Cancer Survivors

Predictors of smoking and physical activity behaviors among cancer survivors.

By: Sandra Stansberry

Cancer survivors are at increased risk for negative health events such as second malignancies, heart disease, and osteoporosis. Healthy lifestyle choices may ameliorate these events.

My practicum took place at MD Anderson’s Department of Behavioral Science where Dr. Karen Basen-Engquist and her research team search for ways to improve the health behaviors of cancer survivors.

I worked on the Healthy Moves Project, a pilot study designed to examine ways to best intervene to improve cancer survivors’ nutrition and physical activity habits. My duties included recruiting participants and analyzing data from a survey in order to examine factors that predict cancer survivors’ health behaviors.

I presented my findings in an oral and poster presentations held at MD Anderson.

Public Health Significance

The Public Health Essential Services that most closely relate to my practicum experience are investigating health problems and researching for innovative solutions. Specifically, by analyzing the survey data, I was able to get a sense of the factors that contribute to the health problems of cancer survivors. Further, by understanding these factors, Dr. Basen-Engquist is able to then address them by designing and testing innovative interventions.

Due to improvements in early detection and treatment, cancer deaths have been declining. Currently, there are around 12 million survivors in the United States.

Practicum Duties

• Maintained study website that participants used to access intervention materials
• Analyzed survey data
• Recruited participants

Advice for Future Students

“You don’t need to have it all figured out yet. Get plenty of real-world experience and try on different hats—eventually you’ll find one that fits.”
Gaps in the Relationship between Substance Abuse Treatment Beds and the Homeless Residential System

by: Kenneth Steel

This summer was an exciting time for the Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County. I was able to aid in a process to develop a series of community-wide conversations set to occur in late August that will ultimately result in the development of a new plan to end homelessness in Houston. However, my specific research this summer was related to a lack of data concerning the movement of homeless individuals between behavioral health treatment facilities, housing programs and the streets. The Coalition has gathered data that has proven that substance abuse is a major concern within the Houston homeless population, yet they do not have a good grasp on where individuals are receiving treatment and where they are ending up after treatment. My job was to look at how this lack of data is affecting the current systems of care for the homeless, and how it is ultimately preventing Houston from adopting newer, evidence-based practices. By performing an analysis of the current systems, I was able to show that there is a need to encourage substance abuse facilities to incorporate their homeless data into the Coalition’s information systems. In their conversations. By recognizing the gaps in the collection of data concerning homeless substance abusers receiving treatment, the right policies can be made to account for certain road-blocks that are preventing the Coalition and the organizations they work with from reaching their goals.

Summer 2012 • Kenneth Steel • The Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County • The relationship between treatment and housing.
IHI Initiates Health Education at Work
By: Katie Wilkerson

Integrated Health, Inc. (IHI), has been implementing worksite wellness plans for BP Houston for the past 3 years. I spent my summer interning for IHI, working closely with a team of 5 employees and 1 other intern to provide health education in the form of health fairs for the Houston campus of BP. The information presented at the health fairs deals with a variety of topics related to nutrition, physical activity, and stress.

In addition to manning IHI’s current education stations, I set out to create 3 new ones for the company’s future use, & I chose stress, stretching, and nutrition facts labels as the topics. Each station includes a small poster, informative handouts, & an interactive element designed to initiate conversation and questions with IHI staff.

Practicum highlights!
• Leading health-related discussions with BP employees at the first health fair of the summer
• Writing and designing the monthly “Health Moment” to be distributed to all employees

Public Health Significance

Integrated Health, Inc. (IHI) is an organization involved in the assurance function of public health. Even though they are in the private sector and work only with private companies, IHI plays an important role in delivering quality health and wellness counseling to Houston area BP employees and the employees of a couple of other smaller companies through an education system.

IHI has built an education system into the workplace at BP by hosting Lunch and Learns, providing on-campus individual counseling, and hosting health fairs on site. Lunch and Learns are opportunities for employees to get away from their computer screen for an hour and listen to a health-related information presentation. The presentation is casual, so employees feel comfortable enough to ask for clarification or more information. IHI is located on the BP campus, so employees can make individual assessment/counseling appointments with a dietitian or exercise physiologist conveniently. IHI also puts on health fairs throughout the year where employees can take a break from their work and engage in fun learning activities. An example of a healthy snack is provided as well. The IHI presence and influence is well received through the whole BP campus.

Advice for Future Practicum Students:

Look for a practicum that gives you an opportunity to do a project you think you will really enjoy. Doing this will make your practicum experience so much more enjoyable!
Prevent Childhood Obesity by Promoting Healthy eating and Physical activity among Head Start Children in Phoenix

By: Beini Zhu

The major project of my practicum with Greater Valley Area Health Education Center (GVAHEC) is to plan an intervention to address childhood obesity issue among Head Start children. We partnered with the City of Phoenix, to understand current situation and future needs. The intervention consists of monthly classes, classroom activities and at-home activities. Parents, teachers and caseworker are all involved. The planning is finished in late August, and the implementation will be in September.

The monthly class covers four aspects of childhood obesity prevention: healthy eating, physical activity, food safety and obesity and other chronic diseases. My final products are class curriculums, support materials and a overview of the intervention.

Lessons Learned

• We may have to develop a program based on a poor needs assessment. It is usually not the same person/agency who do both assessment and development.

Source: http://www.choosemyplate.gov/print-materials-ordering/graphic-resources.html
For more information regarding
The University of Texas School of Public Health,
Office of Public Health Practice
and the practicum program, please visit:

http://sph.uth.tmc.edu/practicum/