Public Health Practice

Stories from the Field
The University of Texas School of Public Health
Student Practicum Experiences
Summer 2012 – Management, Policy & Community Health
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: 30

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#### Management, Policy & Community Health

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Creating a Wellness Initiative for St. Mary’s Church

By: Angela Abouassi

The organization, Doctors for Change is run by physicians who hope that the respect they have in their communities can help them provide a voice for the medically underserved they have been working with in and around Houston. I have been able to work on the Obesity Committee and my project has focused on creating a wellness initiative for the parishioners of St. Mary’s United Methodist Church in the Third Ward of Houston. Our primary goal was increasing fruit and vegetable consumption by collecting baseline food knowledge and food behavior surveys and focus groups. Our cookbook idea came from the members of the church and the recipes came from members of the senior worship group of the church. Recipes were edited by dieticians and the wellness and cookbooks are to be redistributed to the community.

Public Health Significance

Doctors for Change does a lot of work in the context of the Essential Services including identifying community problems, mobilizing partnerships, linking people to needed personal health services and remaining involved to ensure services remain being provided.

Members of the St. Mary’s Church over 55 worship group sought opportunities to provide more wellness services to their members in a way that is accessible to this community. The Essential Service I feel my practicum has been focused on has been mobilizing community partnerships. Ensuring that the goals of my work are consistent and represent both our goals and the community’s goals is critical, after visits and meetings within the community; we have found that one of the main goals we both agreed upon is incorporating more fresh fruits and vegetables. It is essential that the goals of my project represent the needs of the community and mobilizing strong partnerships was critical to that.

Focus Group Recipes Reintroduction Day

We had chefs volunteer to cook the new healthier recipes for the church and conducted focus groups to see if these recipes were appealing and relevant.

Be involved and present in the community!

- The more the members of the community saw me at the church I really felt like a welcome part of their community. Respect the goals of the community and find ways to align your goals with the community’s needs.
Healthy children = Healthy Adults

Childhood Obesity Research Demonstration Project

Oriade Adeoye

Childhood obesity is a national epidemic with some states such as Texas at the top of the list. For my practicum, I worked as an intern on the Childhood Obesity Research Demonstration (CORD) project at the Baylor College of Medicine Children’s Nutrition Research Center (CNRC). It is a multi-site CDC-funded grant with locations in Houston and Austin (Texas), San Diego and Massachusetts. At Baylor, we were concerned with comparing the effectiveness of the traditional physician-directed obesity prevention strategies (“Next Steps”) versus community based prevention strategies “Mind, Exercise, Nutrition, Do It!” (MEND). At the beginning, I participated in taking anthropometric measurements of school kids aged 2-12. Thereafter, I served as liaison for the Texas Children Pediatric clinics where the recruitment took place, making sure the physicians had everything they needed. After recruitment, the kids would be randomized to receive either “Next Steps” or MEND. My final task was to design the primary intervention for obesity prevention in the primary care setting. The study is on-going.

Public Health Significance

My practicum covered several Public Health Essential Services such as research for innovative solutions to health problems, linking people to needed health services, community partnership mobilization and policy development.

In particular, my practicum focused on linking people to needed personal health services.

In the “Next Steps” arm of the study, for example, physicians will learn how to use motivational interviewing techniques to gently persuade parents to adopt healthy behaviors for themselves and their children.

By comparing “Next Steps” and “MEND”, the objective of the CORD project is to see which approach is more effective for obesity prevention and to ultimately translate this to public health policy.

The CNRC, which is one of six human nutrition research centers in the country, conducts scientific investigations into the role of maternal, infant and child nutrition in optimal health, development, and growth. Healthy, physically active kids grow up to be healthy adults.

Special events

• Taking anthropometric measurements of elementary school children, many of whom were Hispanic; so I learned a bit of Spanish too! It was so much fun!

• Sitting-in at conference meetings gave me a rare peek into how decisions were made. I was also given the opportunity to share my views.

Advice for Future Students

• Prepare well in advance
• Faculty are a huge resource, utilize them!
• Be prepared to address cross-cutting competencies. For example, though a Management major, much of my work was in the Behavioral sciences and Community Health.

Signage in front of the CNRC building on Bates.

Sitting at my desk at the CNRC building.
Tackling HIV/AIDS in Baltimore City

Practicum Highlights

- Providing HIV testing at different sites.
- Interacting and hearing the stories of the patients that came into JACQUES.
- Participating in city uprising, which is a major one day testing event hosted by JACQUES Initiative.

Advice for Future Practicum Students

- My advice for future practicum students is to choose a practicum in the field you actually want to be in. Do not choose any practicum just because you need one. I was very fortunate to intern in the field I am interested in and it was very rewarding. This practicum experience confirmed that I am going in the right field and in the right direction and my last piece of advice is to HAVE FUN!

A DAY AT JACQUES INITIATIVE

By: Alisha Borden

My practicum experience was very rewarding. I learned a lot of things and got to experience things and interact with people I would have never otherwise come in contact with. For my practicum, I worked at the University of Maryland, Baltimore at JACQUES Initiative which is an HIV clinic. While there, I provided HIV testing, and support for newly diagnosed patients as well as previously diagnosed patients. I also provided a means for patients to get back into care. I worked with the staff to prepare for city uprising which is a one day testing event held at five different locations throughout Baltimore City. I was proud that I was able to be a part of such a huge event which tested hundreds of people.

Public Health Significance

I feel that we were able to deliver all ten of the essential public health services, but some specific ones include monitoring the health status of the community, diagnosing and investigating health problems hazards in the community, informing people about health issues, mobilizing community partnerships, linking people to needed care, evaluating effectiveness of health services and researching for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.

One touching story from our City Uprising Event is about a man who was newly diagnosed at last year’s event and escorted into care by a volunteer. He is now receiving care and doing well. This year he served a volunteer at the same site he was diagnosed one year ago. He met a man living with HIV and not receiving care. He spoke to that man and provided him with emotional support. The next day he escorted to man into JACQUES Initiative. This moment was very touching and I am glad that one person’s life was made better by our event.
I had the privilege of interning with Harris County Hospital District (HCHD)’s Women With IMPACT, a program within the HCHD IMPACT Collaborative that aims to improve maternal health and birth outcomes in Houston. The project provides a series of health workshops and health service referrals to low-income, pre-conception and inter-conception women in order to link them with health resources and provide them with health education. As a student intern, I was primarily to conduct and present a demographic analysis of the workshop series participants. My duties included data entry and data analysis. I also assisted with survey development, data collection, and recruitment, and attended steering committee, evaluation team, and collaborative meetings. I also had the opportunity to see how the curriculum was delivered by attending some of the workshop sessions.

Public Health Significance

Women With IMPACT practices many of the Essential Services of Public Health. Through the workshop series, the coalition informs and educates participants about maternal and women’s health issues, monitors participants’ health status, and links them to health and human services. The collaborative as a whole mobilizes partnerships within Harris County’s health care community.
Alleviating Food Insecurity among Older Adults

By: Carmen Castro

According to the Meals-on-Wheels of America Association, Texas ranks among the top 5 hunger states in the nation. With nearly 9% of Texans facing food insecurity, Meals-on-Wheels is just one of many programs that work to alleviate food insecurity among older adults living along in the community.

During my practicum, I helped to deliver meals to older adults, assess potential clients for services, and participate in the Advocacy Retreat designed to identify priority issues to address with elected officials in the upcoming legislative session of the Texas Legislature which is set to begin in January of 2013. I also had the opportunity to meet with representatives of the Harris County Area Agency on Aging and the Houston Food Bank to learn about other programs in place to alleviate hunger among older adults in Harris County.

Public Health Significance

Through this practicum experience I was able to assess the needs of older adults who were still independent enough to live in the community, but were homebound and no longer able to prepare meals for themselves due to physical limitations.

In addition to assessing the individual needs of clients and potential clients of the Meals-on-Wheels Program, I was also able to assess the nutritional needs of older adults in general. In a study published by the AARP Foundation titled Food Insecurity Among Older Adults (August 2011) it was reported that key consequences of food insecurity among older adults are that those who are food insecure are twice as likely to be diabetic, and are far less likely to be in excellent or good health. Meals-on-Wheels helps to alleviate food insecurity and thereby helps lead to improved health outcomes for its clients. In addition, Meals-on-Wheels is dedicated to advocating for policies at the state and national levels to alleviate food insecurity among older adults.

Lessons Learned

- On any given day, Meals-on-Wheels provides a hot meal to nearly 4,000 older adults in Harris County.
- “Meals-on-Wheels has been a blessing and so beneficial to this family because I do not have the ability to cook anymore” (Quote from Meals-on-Wheels Client)

Source:
http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/05/07/taste-testing-the-latest-meals-on-wheels/
Public Health Analyst

To Be a Public Health Analyst

By: Nickell Dixon, MPH

My practicum was done at the Office of Women's Health in Washington DC. My project was to be able to conduct the activities of a Public Health Analyst accurately and sufficiently. The best way to know if you want to do something is to do it. Just like the real analyst, I helped put on a conference, attended webinars and calls by leaders of DHHS and other offices and went to working group meetings. I also worked on grants learned about posting grants, conducting grant review groups, and monitoring grantees. I had to work on an evaluation project that looked into grantees progress. I even made a speech on new research that is affecting women to the office. My final product is experience and knowledge of being a federal employee. A book cannot teach you what I learned which makes this priceless!

Public Health Significance

Public health analysts are essential to public health. They provide and manage health education programs that help individuals, families, and their communities. They also collect and analyze data to identify community needs. This project not only fulfilled cross-cutting competencies, but 2 of the APHA 10 Essential Public Health Services. The first is inform, educate, and empower. This was done thru presentations, one on ones with leaders in OWH, and going to conferences sharing findings and ideas. The 2nd is evaluation. I evaluated the grantees on their progress. Not only did I look at their attendance, but I evaluated if they were meeting goals, programming, reaching target population, and effectiveness.

Having this project of learning how to become a public health analyst is very important because the older generation of public health workers are about to retire. It’s time for our generation to now become leaders and we need to know what has been done, what to do and how to do it in order to take over and be successful.

International AIDS Conference 2012

There were so many special events during my practicum. The first was the passing of the Affordable Care Act. The 2nd was the International AIDS Conference, in which I was a volunteer and got a chance to attend sessions and hear speeches from: Bill Clinton, Nancy Pelosi and the Sec. Sebelius.

Advice for Future Students

If you are coming to DC, networking is essential. Be willing to email, call, and talk with everyone!
An Insider’s Look at the World of Health Policy Advocacy

By: Stephen Duckett

At Children’s Defense Fund Texas, I was given the opportunity to immerse myself in health policy and collaborate with elected officials and experts in the field across the state of Texas. I was responsible for researching health insurance exchanges, essential health benefits, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and synthesizing that information for dissemination to the public and stakeholders via published fact sheets. Additionally, I had the opportunity to meet with state legislators, board members, sit in on public health committee hearings in Austin and attend multiple trainings.

My contributions included published ACA fact sheets, grant writing, legislative appointments, assistance with event planning and an online editorial.

Public Health Significance

This practicum encompassed several aspects of the 10 essential public health services. However, the focus was primarily on informing, educating and empowering people concerning health issues.

Through research, I was able to synthesize policy jargon and help create simplified versions to educate the public on the significance of the ACA. We also worked with several grassroot organizations to empower individuals and small businesses to support the ACA efforts.

Policies affect resources, program planning, and, most importantly, large populations of people. Without sound policy and support for that policy, public health programs would not exist to provide the benefits so greatly needed to the community.

Children’s Defense Fund Texas makes health policy a priority because children are greatly affected by programs such as Medicaid and CHIP. Without their work and statewide collaborations children and families would lose and Texas would lose.

Lessons Learned [OR] Advice for Future Students

• Policy is a very challenging field. You may devote a lot of time to a particular piece of legislation only to see it fail. You stay in this field because of the passion you have to make a difference in the lives of those it affects.
Public Health Advocacy: Child Health Issues in Texas

By: Rebecca Ekpeti

I worked at the state office of the Children’s Defense Fund-Texas (CDF-Texas), a non-profit child advocacy group. As a Communications and Policy Intern, I worked to bring awareness to child-related issues in Texas.

This was an important summer for child health in Texas. As the state with the highest rate of uninsured children, Texas had the most to gain, or lose, with the Supreme Court’s decision on the Affordable Care Act (ACA). I helped CDF-Texas communicate facts and promote child health issues in Texas using social media (Facebook and Twitter), blog posts and statewide newspapers. I also helped Texas families and children share their health insurance stories with state and international newspapers.

Additionally, I updated the CDF-Texas website, created several drafts of Op-Eds/Letters to the Editor, and maintained a database of testimonials that CDF-Texas can use in the future.

Public Health Significance

My practicum fit into the Public Health core function of Policy Development as I advocated for child issues and built constituencies. It also addressed three Public Health Essential Services (PHES) related to Policy Development.

Inform, Educate and Empower: I used Facebook, Twitter, stories and Op-Eds to raise awareness of child health issues in Texas. I also contributed to the Texas Well and Healthy (TWAH) campaign efforts to educate Texans about the benefits of the ACA.

Mobilize Community Partnerships: Worked with CDF-Texas to mobilize over 80 Texas community leaders, professionals, and young adults to attend the national conference in Cincinnati, Ohio. There, they gained the knowledge and skills required to partner with CDF-Texas and effectively advocate for children.

Develop Policies: Participated in several strategic planning meetings with partners from state and national policy organizations.

Lessons Learned

“Children don’t vote but adults who do must stand up and vote for them.”

-Marian Wright Edelman
CDF founder and President

Public Health Advocacy

Special Events

- Attended the Children’s Defense Fund’s national conference in Cincinnati, Ohio with over 3,000 child advocates.
- Wrote initial draft of a joint Op-Ed about the Supreme Court’s decision on the Affordable Care Act which was picked up by the Houston Chronicle, Kaiser Health News and other newspapers.
- Performed daily environmental scans of child-related issues in statewide news.
- Participated in statewide press outreach efforts.

Fast Fact >> Texas has had the highest rate of uninsured children in the nation for ten years.

[Source: CDF-Texas]
Assessing pain management practices at Methodist Hospital proved to be an ambitious task. In order to evaluate units’ pain documentation methods, I selected the units that were consistently achieving high scores in pain documentation for both the AM and PM shifts. I then prepared a process map of Methodist Hospital’s policy to better understand the areas where units were free to determine their own guidelines. Next, I contacted the unit directors and set up appointments to observe nurses during their patients’ pain assessment and pain documentation. Due to time constraints, I was unable to follow my original timeline. My anticipated next steps were:

- Create process maps for each of the top three units and for the three lower performance units
- Identify compliance with the Methodist Hospital policy
- Find common best practices between the top three units
- Apply best practices to pilot units

In order to ensure that this project would be continued, I presented a comprehensive PowerPoint presentation to my preceptor, Liisa Ortegon, Vice-President of Operations. I explained the areas that the six units seemed to be struggling with. I also introduced some successful initiatives in the top units that I perceived as being contributors to their high scores.

Public Health Significance

Pain management is a crucial component of patient safety. In fact, in the nursing world, it is often referred to as the “fifth vital sign”. There are some major barriers to ensuring that the patient is at a comfortable pain level, many of them including patient education, pain assessment with pain rating scales and effective re-assessment of pain.

My project addressed the Assure, Evaluate and Research essential services of public health. Pain management is a broad field that requires a competent workforce, effective health services and research on new best practices in pain management.

Advice for Future Practicum Students

I volunteered my help for any work that had to be done and was able to network with some fascinating individuals. This also led me to become involved with Methodist International and fulfill my practicum requirements for my global health concentration.
Pricing for International Patients

Developing a Competitive Pricing Strategy for International/Self-Pay Patients, by JEAN K. GILBERT

For my operations-focused practicum at St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital, I was tasked with helping the International Division become more competitive by reviewing its current pricing strategies and benchmarking them with other institutions.

When I started, my host organization had already gathered the information highlighting the need for improvement, and my primary duties involved collecting the most commonly requested procedures for international/self-pay patients then benchmarking both pricing strategies and prices themselves with similar institutions throughout the nation.

The product I planned on creating was a recommendation for a new pricing strategy, but unexpected findings led to questions in other areas. Thus, my final results were that SLEH is priced competitively, so there may be other areas where my host can improve its appeal to international and self-pay patients.

While I did not find what I expected, I believe this experience was important for teaching me about the benchmarking and problem-solving processes utilized in hospitals. I look forward to using this information in my future career.

Public Health Significance

My practicum relates most closely to the ninth Essential Service of Public Health, or “Evaluating effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services.”

In my experience at my host organization, St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital is always looking at ways to provide more effective services as well as those of higher quality to their patients and community. One example I saw in particular was SLEH’s ongoing research to decrease post-surgical infections.

In terms of my practicum, I believe that developing a more competitive pricing strategy increases St. Luke's accessibility for international and self-pay patients. If an organization’s prices are much higher than its competitors, not only can it lose business, but it can also preclude patients from receiving the care they need.

Practicum Duties

- Gather, combine, and study data from operations, finance, and international services
- Create a list of similar institutions to benchmark
- Benchmark for both pricing strategies and prices

Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Take advantage of your practicum—tell your preceptor of any additional interests you have so that he or she can help you attend meetings or Q&A sessions at your site that address these interests

Healthcare is no longer a localized industry—especially when you are in the Texas Medical Center

Emergency Medicine Research

Practicum Highlights

- Worked alongside researchers
- Contributed to emergency medicine research

Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Always go over the reading material your supervisor gives to you.

Improving Emergency Medical Care

By: Angelli Gomez

I assisted emergency medicine researchers by doing a literature review and a case report.

I worked on Asperger Syndrome and the connection the condition may have on recurrent use of the health system.

My organization participated in a committee to determine what best could be done in the frequent utilization of the emergency department.

I was involved in writing up a case report about frequently-using the emergency department for acute health conditions.

My final product was a written case report about recurrent use of the emergency department and its implications.

Public Health Significance

This practicum falls into the essential public health service of researching new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.

The methods by which these functions and services are provided by the organization are through the recruitment, evaluation, and analysis of subjects, data, and results, respectively.

My host organization contributes to public health because it investigates public health problems and designs and evaluates solutions to those problems.
Dedicated to the Health of All Children

Up Close at the American Academy of Pediatrics

By: Laura K. Grubb MD

I completed a 4 week internship in the Federal Affairs Office of the American Academy of Pediatrics. As a practicing pediatrician, I wanted to learn how my professional organization advocated for children and participate in that process.

AAP advocates for legislation that protects and improves the health of children as well as lobbies for increasing funding for pediatric programs. AAP hosts advocacy workshops and listserves to get pediatricians involved in advocacy. AAP members frequently advocate on the Hill and contact their representatives on behalf of the AAP.

I worked on clinical issues, health care coverage, financing, safety, etc. I authored comments to DHHS concerning access to contraception and accurate sex education. I wrote action alerts to membership on funding issues, the Sunshine Provision and the Supreme Court ACA decision.

Children Are the Face of Public Health

The AAP advocates for quality care for 94 million children, adolescents and young adults in the United States, approximately 1/3 of the population. AAP was instrumental in the writing of PPACA, ensuring such provisions as eliminating pre-existing conditions for children, expansion of dependent coverage up to age 26, and determinants of essential health benefits for children.

I worked on increased access to contraception without cost sharing and increasing food and drug safety for children.

Outside the Supreme Court: Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act Decision on June 28, 2012.

Special Events

- House Energy and Commerce Committee, Subcommittee on Health. “NIH Reform and Funding Priorities” with Dr. Francis Collins
- Children’s Health Environmental Network briefing (11 June 2012).
- Global Vaccine Initiative with sponsored by the AAP and the UN Foundation Shot@Life Campaign
- Telephone conference with Secretary Kathleen Sebelius on the Consumer Assistance Program grants, a program of the ACA
- Press Conference with House Minority Leader, Nancy Pelosi
- Sex & Politics in the Capital City: An Intern Advocacy Series on Sexual Health, Reproductive Justice and HIV/AIDS
- Title X briefing sponsored by the National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association

Lessons Learned

This internship opened my eyes to the vast involvement of the AAP in shaping federal policy. Almost every piece of legislation affects children in some way and the AAP Federal Affairs staffers are vigilant in monitoring legislation.
Public Health Significance

The Samsung HCIT division and its EMR provide the essential services of "assur[ing] a competent public health and personal health care workforce" as well as "research[ing] for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems" (APHA).

Assurance includes the efficient, effective, and safe management of electronic patient health information (ePHI) within and among different hospital systems. The Samsung SDS EMR provides a means by which the client’s health system workforce can not only safely transfer ePHI and deliver expedited patient care, but also unify the hospital’s variegated applications into one integrated and interoperable electronic system.

Innovative research is essential to a pioneering field such as HCIT. The Samsung HCIT division consistently seeks new insights and ergonomic solutions by visiting providers in their work environments to gather immediate feedback. This project is in ongoing pursuit of the best uses for technology in healthcare delivery today.

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By: Bona Gwak

This summer I had the opportunity to work with Samsung SDS America and its newest client – a top ten not-for-profit Catholic hospital system – on the Samsung EMR (electronic medical records). This was a particularly exciting endeavor because I was involved in the beginning phases of the product’s development, pilot implementation, as well as solution delivery. Working with a diverse body of software developers, business consultants, clinical analysts, and healthcare providers, I played many different roles on a daily basis. These included liaising to the technical team, managing business relationships, collecting physician feedback, providing technical support for customer accounts, delivering information to customers, and occasionally leading bilingual meetings.

Key accomplishments of the project’s first phase, which lasted ten weeks, were the development and testing of inbound and outbound interfaces, physician template standardization, and comprehensive data validation. Plans for the EMR’s following phases include features such as voice-to-text functionality for physician dictation and handheld mobile device compatibility.

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Pearls of Wisdom for Future Students

- The classroom is not the only place you will learn what you need to succeed in the healthcare arena. In fact, lessons from the workplace may afford you the edge you never had – the tact, the relationships, and the one-of-a-kind experience.

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"In software systems it is often the early bird that makes the worm.”
- Alan Perlis

"Your x-ray showed a broken rib, but we fixed it with Photoshop.”
Source: http://www.glasbergen.com

"Your x-ray showed a broken rib, but we fixed it with Photoshop.”
Source: http://www.glasbergen.com

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Summer 2012 • Bona Gwak • Samsung SDS America • Healthcare Information Technology
Evaluation of HCHD Farmers Markets

An innovative idea to impact community health.
By: Angelique Harding

My practicum experience took place within the Harris County Hospital District (HCHD) community health clinics. Recently the HCHD partnered with a nonprofit called Veggie Pals, to provide farmers’ markets within the community clinics.

My community preceptor was Dr. Ann Barnes, the director of the disease prevention division and a fellow SPH alumna. Her vision and ultimate goal for the markets is that their presence will increase the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables (FFV) among the HCHD patients, employees and even the surrounding communities.

One of my contributions to this project was to survey first time customers to assess their current FFV intake and any barriers to purchasing or consuming FFV. After the conducting surveys at 4 sites, the data will be analyzed to guide further direction of the markets. Also to increase the knowledge and awareness of the communities, we focused on community outreach.

Special during your practicum
- Assessing current fresh fruit and vegetable consumption
- Interaction with patients and staff from HCHD & Veggie Pals
- Outreach efforts to communities around the clinic
- Working with an SPH alumna

Public Health Significance

This project primarily addressed the assessment component of the core functions of public health. The assessment was accomplished through the evaluation of patrons of the market in the following areas: FFV consumption, types of FFV often consumed demographics, and any previous experience with farmers markets. A secondary aspect of the project addressed the assurance component. This was accomplished through efforts of community outreach and education.

The mission of the Harris County Hospital District is to, “improve our community’s health by delivering high-quality healthcare to Harris County residents.” The HCHD is able to fulfill this mission through a variety of programs and services to the community such as: school-based clinics, mobile health units, full service hospitals, teaching Baylor and UTHealth students, and designation of a patient-centered medical home. The diversity of endeavors by the HCHD demonstrates their commitment to public health for current and future generations. This project adds to that mission and will hopefully be a model for implementation in other communities throughout the nation and abroad.

Advice for Future Practicum Students
- Be humble.
- Learn to be flexible and adapt when necessary.
- Have (or develop) patience for the organizational processes.
- Do not let setbacks dim your passion!
- Communication is key!


Summer 2012 • Angelique Harding • Harris County Hospital District • Evaluation of Farmer’s Markets
Entertainment Education in Healthcare

The Role of Entertainment Education in Healthcare Decision Making

By: André W. Hite, Jr.

Scene One: A 30-something African-American daughter is discussing her concerns about her father-in-law’s recent colorectal cancer diagnosis with her middle aged parents, whom have reservations regarding the idea of being screened for colorectal cancer. This soap opera style scenario utilizes a form of health education known as Entertainment Education (EE). EE seeks to both educate and entertain individuals about important issues. While its roots focused more on social issues, more recently EE has been used in the healthcare arena to help individuals make healthcare decisions. In healthcare, EE has used various vehicles of message delivery such as soap operas/telenovelas, TV dramas, and stage plays.

Public Health Significance

Through the use of engaging storylines utilizing mediums such as television, EE has been shown to be an effective strategy in educating the public about various health topics such as breast cancer, HIV, organ donation, and obesity. It has been widely used both locally and globally in countries such as Korea, Tanzania, and Israel. Targeted populations have included women, minorities, adolescents, as well as the general public. EE has been shown to increase knowledge, reduce decisional conflict, change behavior, increase self-efficacy, change behavioral intention stage, and encourage participants to encourage others to engage in healthy behaviors. EE has also been a successful strategy in helping individuals make decisions concerning their health such as deciding between screening choices, and/or treatment choices. EE is an exciting area and as more rigorous evaluative research is done, more effective and creative strategies can be used to further educate, change behavior, and assist individuals in making healthcare decisions.
Advocating for a Healthier Texas

The Healthcare Struggle Continues in the Lone Star State

By: Cedric James

I completed my summer practicum with Legacy Community Health Services at the Montrose Clinic. I worked under the guidance of Senior Director of Government Relations Randall Ellis and Public Affairs Field Specialist Januari Leo. I wrote for the advocacy portion of their website addressing multiple public health issues.

I was fortunate enough to work on topics such as the Texas HIV Medication Program (THMP), Syringe Exchange, and the challenges surrounding the LGBT elder community etc.

Legacy provides health care to Houstonians in a judgment free and confidential environment on the premise that health care is not a privilege.

My final product was a policy brief addressing the shortcomings of the Housing Opportunity for People with AIDS (HOPWA) program. The key findings of the policy brief were that half of the people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) will need some form of housing assistance in their lifetime, the projected undiscounted cost of a HIV treatment for one individual is $620,000, and the current formula for HOPWA only includes AIDS diagnoses but excludes HIV diagnoses. We must continue to address the HOPWA program because stable housing equals a greater life for PLWHA.

Special events/duties during your practicum

- I participated in the National HIV Testing Day at the Montrose Clinic.
- I attended the 2012 Democratic State Convention.

Lessons Learned [OR] Advice for Future Students

- Great opportunities reveal themselves when you are open to new paths. Never be afraid to share your thoughts, ideas, or opinions regarding your project.

Public Health Significance

Legacy is able to address all ten essential public health services in a direct or indirect capacity. However, my practicum experience focused on the essential public health service of informing, educating, and empowering people about health issues.

I was given the opportunity to create and present Advocacy 101 Training. The goal of the training was to give the average individual the basic knowledge of completing a successful visit with their local representative who influences policy.
Emergency Preparedness

Public Health Significance

Emergency preparedness is a very important public health element. Planning for, training on, and responding to threats is of the utmost importance to keep the public safe and healthy. Public Health threats include: natural disasters, man-made accidental and intentional incidents, and biological outbreaks.

Emergency Preparedness as a whole dealt with nearly all of the 10 Essential Services of Public Health. In fact the CDC’s new 15 Public Health Preparedness Capabilities seem to match very well with the Essential Services of Public Health. However my specific work dealt mostly with Essential Services numbers 2: Diagnosing and Investigating hazards, and 9: Evaluating the effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of population-based health services. Through my experiences and report, I learned about emergency preparedness and then evaluated information and found issues that could be addressed to improve preparedness.

Summer with DSHS HSR 6/5S Public Health Preparedness

By: Veronica Landa

This summer I did my practicum with the Department of State Health Services Health Service Region 6/5S’s Public Health Preparedness division. This agency is responsible for planning, training and exercising, and responding to public health emergency events.

Health Service Region 6/5S (HSR 6/5S) is Houston and the surrounding 16 county area. HSR 6/5S serves as the local health department for 7 of those 16 counties. The biggest threats in this region are hurricanes.

I was fortunate to get to explore many different aspects of what this agency does, but focused on assessing risks and mitigating factors in the seven counties that HSR 6/5S serves as the local health department based on CDC’s capabilities assessments. The findings will be presented in a report and used to better prepare this region for emergencies in the future.

Practicum Special Events:

- Department of State Health Services (DSHS) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) trainings
- Writing After Action Report (AAR)
- Emergency Preparedness Workshop
- Point of Dispensation (POD) Set Up Trainings
- Regional Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) Meetings
- Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) Quarterly Meeting/ Joint Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP) Meeting
Public Health Significance

Essential services that were included within the scope of the projects were:
- Mobilizing community partnerships (1)
- Developing plans (2)
- Linking (3)
- Evaluation (4)
- Research (5)

Partnerships between MDACC, physicians, patients and RCCs were vital in establishing a network (1). Without these partnerships, a link for electronic telesurgery would not be possible (3).

Plans and drafts were developed to provide guidance for effective execution for components of the project (2). Without these blueprints, a clear direction would be lacking in the processes.

Evaluation and research were services used for the development of questionnaires and business plans for new technologies (4 & 5).

Intersecting Financial and Operational Analysis in Public Health Management at MD Anderson Cancer Center

By: Sharif Mansur, MDACC

The major public health topics addressed throughout the summer encompassed assessment and assurance and spanned two separate projects. The approaches taken by MDACC were to develop a questionnaire aimed at obtaining patient/provider feedback for a telesurgery project (project 1) and a business plan for a navigational device in Orthopaedic surgery (project 2).

I was involved with both projects and some of my duties included researching the literature for telesurgery-related questionnaires and constructing a template for a business plan including volume projections and ROI analysis.

The final projects will be a polished questionnaire used for telesurgery feedback on operational analysis and a business plan for a navigation system to be presented to executives in Orthopaedics.

Research and analysis showed fiscal benefit from the navigation system and deemed to be advantageous in patient outcomes. The questionnaires are in the process of being implemented.

Assessment and Assurance in Public Health Technology

Highlights
- Invaluable meetings with physicians and executives
- Guidance and mentoring from polished executives
- Live look-ins on surgery using the new navigation system

Advice for Future Students
- “Don’t let intimidation stop you from demonstrating your maximum potential, realize at the end of the day, you ARE here for a reason.”
- “Ask questions, this is a LEARNING experience.”

Figure 1: Image demonstrates the concept of telesurgery, where physicians are operating on patients electronically, using robotic devices.

Courtesy of: Karl Storz Endoskope

Figure 2: Navigation Software

Courtesy of: Stryker Navigation
Public Health Significance

Specifically, the team addresses the following essential services:

Monitor

An increase in the number of infections led to the team’s effort to understand why this was occurring and what could be done to ensure healthier patients.

Diagnose and investigate

Patients who are diagnosed with C. diff. at St. Luke’s are approached to join the study. The team hopes to prevent recurrent infections.

Mobilize

Grant monies are often solicited from the NIH and other organizations to help fund new projects.

Inform, educate, and empower

The research team frequently publishes groundbreaking information about CDI.

Research

The research team always looking for new solutions and projects in CDI and is looking to study fecal transplantation.

The importance of C. diff. research

- Infection can lead to severe, persistent diarrhea, colitis, or even death
- More likely to affect those who are already very sick and on broad-spectrum antibiotics
- Once infected, recurrences are more likely
- Expensive to treat with antibiotics that don’t always cure the patient
- Number of cases of CDI are increasing annually

Advising for Future Students

- Find a particular area of interest within your practicum, and use that area to focus your plans. You’ll find that you’re more successful when you narrow your field of interest.

Protecting patients from recurrent Clostridium difficile infections in the hospital

By: Rincy Mathai

I spent the summer working as a practicum student with Dr. Herbert DuPont’s Clostridium difficile research team at St. Luke’s Episcopal Hospital in Houston, TX. Specifically, I worked on a prospective study that evaluates the pathogenesis of C. diff. in ICU patients who test positive for C. diff. The study hopes to better understand the patients’ inflammatory and immune response to recurrent C. diff. infection.

In the beginning of the summer, I teamed up with another student from UTSPH to recruit patients into the study. Patients were eligible to be enrolled in the study if stool tests showed they were infected with the C. diff. bacteria.

Toward the end of the summer, I began following up with patients through phone calls to assess their health and to see if they were experiencing symptoms of C. diff. infection, including diarrhea, abdominal pain, nausea, and loss of appetite. It was a great experience, and I learned a lot about patient recruitment and patient follow-up.

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Toward the end of the practicum, I presented an article to the research team about long-term follow-up of colorectal fecal microbiota transplants. This is a new frontier for C. diff. treatment, and it is expected to be a successful treatment option.

Advice for Future Students

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The core functions of public health. Photo from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/ephil/core_ess.htm
Long-Term Care

What is an Ombudsman?
http://www.facebook.com/LTCOmbudsmen

Use of social media to increase awareness of the Harris County Ombudsman Program and data analysis of technological disparities among long-term care facilities

By: Ricardo Mercado

The practicum was with the Harris County Ombudsman Program, which operates under the University of Texas School of Nursing Center on Aging. For this practicum, I used Social Marketing theory in conjunction with Social Media to increase awareness about the Ombudsman Program among consumers of long-term care services and potential volunteers. Google+ and Pinterest accounts were created to go along with the already established Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn accounts in hopes that these avenues will provide a way for the program to put their name out in the community. In addition, I collected data, through phone interviews, on internet access and social media use among long-term care facilities. The data showed that while many facilities are beginning to offer wireless internet services, the use of social media lags behind.

Public Health Significance

Linking and Assurance:
The new social media avenues will hopefully link individuals to the Ombudsman Program, for information and volunteer opportunities. Using social media will allow the program to reach more people in a convenient way. It increases traffic for the program and increases the change for potential volunteers.

Evaluate Accessibility:
Through data collection I was able to evaluate the number of long-term care facilities that provided access to wireless internet services to residents. The data will help in showing if there is a disparity among facilities depending on the types of residents that live there (Medicaid, Medicare, Private Pay)

Special events/duties during your practicum

- Toured Hallmark Anderson Health Care Center and Westbury Place
- Attended Ombudsman training and department meetings

“Social Media has the potential to improve care and quality of life.”

Ombudsman Program Slogan
http://www.facebook.com/LTCOmbudsmen

What is an Ombudsman?
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Managing Healthcare

In respect to the 10 essential public health services, my practicum experience focused on “developing policies and plans” however, the emphasis has been more on planning than policy development.

Through its strategic planning process, Baylor College of Medicine has positioned itself to embrace change in the healthcare industry by focusing on clinical efficiency, quality of care, and new venture opportunities based on trends and forecasts. BCM seeks to innovate by means of the (soon to open) McNair Campus, which will provide superior outpatient services on the convenient outskirts of the medical center. As a team member at BCM, I have focused much of my energy on the alignment of departmental annual plans with the university’s goals and mission in the over-arching strategic plan. Those departmental tactics which align with specific interdisciplinary areas are categorized as “strategic priorities” and are communicated as the highest importance to faculty and staff.

Strategic Planning for an Integrated Medical School

By: Will Murphy

For the summer of 2012 I have served as an intern in the Office of the President at Baylor College of Medicine. The majority of my work has pertained to strategic management projects, including SWOT analyses, reviewing the alignment of departmental annual plans with BCM’s strategic plan, and industry analyses. These projects are designed to improve BCM’s position in national rankings.

BCM educates students, generates cutting-edge research, and provides clinical care to the Houston community. My area of public health is healthcare management. One particular project I assisted in was the creation of BCM’s strategic plan, which was presented by our CEO and President to the Board of Trustees, faculty members, and administrators.

My final project was a industry analysis presented to BCM executives.
The Effectiveness of the I.M.P.A.C.T. Collaborative
By: Nkiruka Ojukwu-Ehiemere

The IMPACT Collaborative (Impacting Maternal & Prenatal Care Together) was created in May 2010. The IMPACT Collaborative unites individuals and organizations across Harris County to improve access to prenatal care. I was asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the entire IMPACT Collaborative. Each member of the Collaborative had the opportunity to participate in a self-administered internet-based questionnaire. The questionnaire had 27 questions and took 12-15 minutes to complete.

At the conclusion of the practicum, the deliverables will be a network map and the analysis of the data.

Public Health Significance

This practicum experience was related to the Essential Services of Public Health. Evaluation is one of the ten Essential Services. The Collaborative was evaluated on topics like recruitment, decision making, leadership, relationships, participation, communication and sustainability. The evaluation occurred mid-project giving the Collaborative the opportunity to make alterations that will improve its effectiveness as it progresses forward.

Improving the effectiveness of the Collaborative increases the effectiveness of the programs implemented. In turn, more effective programs mean more women will have access to prenatal care.

Lessons Learned for Future Practicum Students

Make sure you strategically allocate time out for every activity that needs to be completed before the completion of the practicum. Give yourself deadlines to note when things should be completed at the beginning of the practicum. On the other hand, be sure to be flexible. Things may not go as planned so be ready to adjust and make it work.
Preventing Teen Pregnancy in Harris County

By: STEPHANIE OMAJE

Who: Teens up to age 23
What: Provision of health services
Where: 7 Baylor Teen Clinics
Why: Reduce incidence of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases
How: Centering Pregnancy model interventions e.g., Project Passport, Fatherhood programs e.g., Project

Bootstrapping, community outreach, AskTiff (professional anonymous question and answer application, and text messaging health facts).

I helped prepare a Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) grant for the prevention of secondary pregnancies in teens in Harris County.

Public Health Significance

The Baylor Teen Health Clinic incorporates essential services of public health such as monitoring the health status of Harris County teens through focus groups and research endeavors, and informing, educating and empowering teens through interventions and community outreaches.

The clinic also mobilizes community partnerships for outreaches, programs, and projects geared towards teen health. During my experience, we did this through grant writing and community projects.

The clinic ensures that teens are linked to health and social services within the community.

The clinic is evaluated for its effectiveness within the community and the quality of its services. This included a site visit during my practicum experience on which the clinic scored 98%
Public Health Significance

This practicum most closely relates to the research segment of the essential services. Modern day adolescents are evolving; the current literature is not keeping up. With the evolution of social media and the burgeoning of cyber bullying and prescription drug abuse research is necessary to understand the dynamics of today's teens.

Once this study is complete it will also relate to the monitoring and diagnosing segment of the essential services.

There were not opportunities for our own projects. Entering 25 pages of data for over 1000 participants was a challenge in itself. However it is possible to use the gathered data to develop our own research paper in the future. I believe entering data correctly is very important to public health research. If hypothesis is the foundation of research, correct data are its support beams. Accurate data enables researchers to come to a valid conclusion with as little bias as possible. This is absolutely significant to public health.

Dating It Safe: Adolescent Dating Pattern Study

By: Guilmate Pierre

Dating It Safe is longitudinal study on teen dating patterns at UTMB. The study surveys over 1000 participants in 7 high schools in the Houston - Galveston area. The goal of this study is to analyze the risky patterns in teen dating behaviors and to contribute to intervention and policy decision regarding teen health.

The survey includes measures for a range of behaviors and mental health status such as dating violence, risky sex, sexting, drugs/alcohol, anxiety, depression, eating disorders, parental violence, peer violence, and bullying. This year is the third wave of the data collection and my duties were mainly organizing, coding, and entering the data for analysis. This was done on a netbook using Microsoft Database.

The study is still in the data gathering stage, the results have not been analyzed to date.

Main Highlights

- Database coding
- Data Entry

Lessons Learned

- Patience
- Team work
- Goal setting
- Engaging environment
Public Health Significance

Increasing the use and access to primary care facilities stands at the forefront of preventative health, and is a great concern to the public health community.

My practicum relates to the Essential Services of Public Health by researching potential solutions to frequent ER visits while evaluating effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of health services through the use of the focus groups, questionnaire and individual interviews. This data will contribute to potential solutions to effectively link people in the Houston community to needed personal health services, and provide a direction for future research.

I was fortunate to work with employees at CHEER because the center provides comprehensive health disparities research, education and training. As such, the center touches on many of the fundamental roles and needs of public health like inform, educate, and empower, and assuring a competent public health and personal healthcare workforce.

Finding the link to bring frequent ER users for primary care to appropriate office based providers

By: Kristen Presleigh

In an effort to reduce frequent use of emergency rooms as primary care facilities, the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center’s Center for Health Equity and Evaluation Research (CHEER) and Hermann Memorial Healthcare System collaborated on a project to find a more efficient link to appropriate primary care use. Focus groups at City of Houston Multi-service Centers, along with survey participants at Memorial Hermann Northwest, Southwest, and Texas Medical Center Hospitals provided platforms for data collection for the project.

I actively recruited at two of the hospital sites with the help of the patient navigators, imputed data, and began data analysis for the project. Future plans are to start individual interviews next month, and continue data analysis. It is also my hope to contribute to the manuscript expected this fall.

Duties during your practicum

- Helped facilitate and take notes for focus group meetings
- Performed qualitative analysis of focus group transcripts
- Recruited self pay and Medicaid ER patients and parents of patients to participate in the questionnaire
- Worked directly with the patient navigators and Postdoctoral fellow at CHEER

Advice for Future Students

- The best piece of wisdom that I could offer is to be open to changing your work strategy as you go in your practicum site. You may be faced with many obstacles, but the exciting challenge is to see how you’ll react and contributes to your solutions.

Thanks to the collaborative effort between these two organizations, the future analysis should help alleviate our fragmented and uncoordinated health system.

Source:
1. MDACC_2C_RGB_TC_tag_V. Photo courtesy of MD Anderson.
Creating an Infusion Suite at TCH Pavilion for Women

By: SAHAR M. QASHQAI

I began my practicum observing and monitoring the processes of the Pavilion for Women. As my understanding developed, I began to take on a few projects, primarily assisting with scheduling and workflows for the new Infusion Suite due to open September 4th.

I met with representatives from pharmacy, electronic medical records, and individuals who currently run the infusion center on the children's side of the hospital to gain a full understanding of what needs to be implemented before the Suite opens their doors in September. I then facilitated meetings to design workflows, collect resources and ensure that the suite will be fully staffed.

Although the suite did not open during my practicum I believe I played a part in creating the instrumental groundwork for a smooth opening.

Public Health Significance

My practicum incorporated many of the essential public health services as I worked to create a new infusion suite.

My process began by monitoring, diagnosing and investigating the needs and potential problems affiliated with an infusion suite. Once this information was gathered, I worked to develop policies and plans that support the suite’s ability to provide the best possible care. It was also vital that I worked to mobilize all the necessary parties to participate in the development process in order to assure that every component of this project would be addressed. Through this, I was able to link experts or those with valuable information to the individuals responsible for their component of the project.

I primarily served as a liaison and researcher for this project. Knowing that I would not be present for the final days before the suite opened, I focused on ensuring that everyone who would be a part of that had all the information they needed.

Lessons Learned

Communication and outreach are key! Try to get to know as many people as possible early on in your practicum, they will be key resources later on.
Public Health Policy in Legislation

Policy Work: The initial step towards change
By: Michelle Seebachan

Through my public health practicum, I was able to experience and learn about several facets of the city and state governments’ involvement in health.

I was fortunate enough to work on a range of issues including child trafficking in Houston, men’s health awareness, and Medicaid expansion. For each of these topics, I researched and synthesized a broad range of materials into concise memos to be used as briefs. This is a crucial step in the development of health policy—it’s where policy advisors piece together the past, present, and future of important health topics.

My final product was a comprehensive look at Medicaid expansion. This subject will be one of the leading topics in the 2013 legislative session. Texas is currently opposed to program expansion, but there is potential for high impact minor policy changes.

Public Health Significance

As it relates to the 10 Essential Public Health Services, my practicum allowed me to work on mobilizing community partnerships to identify and solve health problems. This was achieved through partnerships with local organizations like Texans Together, Children at Risk, and Hip Hop for HIV.

My practicum also allowed me to contribute to developing policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts. Many of the partner organizations with which Senator Ellis works, bring to light pressing community issues. Through dialogues with constituents and the organizations, the staff policy advisors are able to propose policies that will solve problems at a local level.

The local needs are taken into consideration when formulating state policy, too. Medicaid expansion, which I worked on for my final project, is a top down policy initiative. Because it is a state program, the final rulings at the state level will affect what can be done at the local level.
Texas Children's X-Ray Initiative: Providing Quality Care while Cutting Costs by Sharda' Selman

At my practicum site, I was privileged with the opportunity to work on several projects throughout the summer. One of these projects included working with the Evidence Based Outcomes Department to consider the financial implications of reducing the number of x-rays given to asthma patients. Due to the change in which children's hospitals will be reimbursed, there have been concerns regarding ways to cut costs.

In order to determine the cost effectiveness of decreasing the number of x-rays given to x-ray patients by 15%, I was provided a cohort of patients from 2009 to present who presented with asthma and the number of x-rays they received. After determining the contribution margin and cost of providing the x-rays with and without the 15% reduction, it was concluded this reduction would not be a significant financial impact on margin.

In my practicum site, I was privileged with the opportunity to work on several projects throughout the summer. One of these projects included working with the Evidence Based Outcomes Department to consider the financial implications of reducing the number of x-rays given to asthma patients. Due to the change in which children’s hospitals will be reimbursed, there have been concerns regarding ways to cut costs.

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Public Health Significance

There were several public health essentials that were relevant to my practicum experience. One key essential was informing people about health issues. After much research, upper management determined that many asthma patients do not require x-rays and in fact have the same outcome as patients who do receive x-rays. Therefore, they planned to inform doctors of their findings and develop a protocol for doctors to use for asthma patients that would help alleviate costs. This also leads into the assurance essential. Another key essential relevant to my practicum was evaluation.

Although management knew that decreasing the number of x-rays would not jeopardize the quality of care, they still wanted to make sure they would not be causing financial burden on the hospital.

Texas Children’s is constantly looking for ways to better serve the community by assessing what services their patients need but are not offered. In addition, they are working to increase the access to pediatric care for those patients who are not able to get quality care.

Practicum Highlights

- Ability to work with the Sr. Vice President on projects that will shape the future of the hospital
- Learning key financial skills and being able to apply them in real work settings

Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Be very honest with your preceptor about what you plan to gain from your experience so they will know how to shape your experience and maximize your time at the site. Give details into what you plan to gain such as advanced skills in excel.
Maternal and Child Health

McLennan County: Achieving Better Care Through MCH Needs Assessment

By: Jessica Lauren Thames

The Waco-McLennan County Public Health District submitted an application with MCH Resources, Washington, DC, to have an intern implement a MCH Needs Assessment in McLennan County.

As the chosen Epidemiologist intern, my duties included finalizing the survey tool, making arrangements with health organizations to have their patients complete the survey, data collection, and data management. The results from the data will be presented in a final report that will be available to the public on http://www.waco-texas.com/cms-healthdepartment/ in August.

Public Health Significance

This practicum experience related to several Essential Services of Public Health. It focused on one critical area of MCH Epidemiology, Need Assessment, which is the systematic analysis, assessment, and projection of health and resources in a given population or community.

Two additional Public Health Essential Services that most closely related to this practicum are: (1) Research to gain insight into the health problems/needs for women and children within a defined community; and (2) Inform, educate and empower stakeholders. Through the data, the community can be informed, the health department can educate and the community can become empowered to become healthier.

As a public health department, Waco-McLennan Public Health District contributes to public health with all of the services that are provided.
Hepatitis B immunity

Practicum Highlights

- Participated in every part of the clinical research process
- Applied biostatistical methods from PH 1690: Foundations of biostatistics and PH 1700: Intermediate biostatistics
- Published abstract to a conference

Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Look for a practicum that is in line with your career interests.
- Find a practicum preceptor who can be a mentor for you.
- Start looking for your practicum early (as in August if you want a practicum for May)!

High prevalence of HBV non-immunity in vaccinated pediatric liver transplant recipients

By: Matthew Ton-That

On what public health issue/topic did you work?

“I looked at whether these liver transplant patients needed to be re-vaccinated for hepatitis B.”

What approach was taken by your host organization to address this issue?

“We analyzed data with biostatistical methods to assess the need for a change in policy of vaccination. Then, we wrote an abstract describing our findings. It will be presented at a conference.”

What were your duties?

“This was the cool part. I participated in every part of the research process, including hypothesis development, data collection, biostatistical analysis, interpretation of results, and manuscript writing.”

What was the final product you created for your practicum site?

“I submitted an abstract that was eventually accepted to a conference (NASPGHAN) as first author.”

Public Health Significance

In this practicum, we work to diagnose and investigate the need for vaccination for hepatitis B in liver transplant patients. We use real data and statistical methods to reveal whether there is need for a change in standard of care.

Future work may be in informing care providers and patients of the need for re-vaccination in liver transplant patients and working towards appropriate policy development. The study could be broadly impactful in its applicability to other transplant patients and for other vaccinations.
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/