

# Public Health Practice



## Stories from the Field

The University of Texas School of Public Health  
Student Practicum Experiences  
Summer 2013 – DrPH Students

The practicum experience is an integral part of the MPH and DrPH curricula. Public health students are provided with the opportunity to apply their classroom knowledge to real world settings through which they make a meaningful contribution to a public health organization.

Under the guidance of a community preceptor and faculty sponsor, students from all divisions gain a deeper understanding of public health practice, interact with professionals in the field, and expand their repertoire of professional skills.

This eleventh-edition e-magazine showcases student practicum experiences throughout the Summer 2013 semester. (Prior semesters may be accessed through the e-book, a collection of student abstracts and e-magazines describing their experiences.)

# Practicum Topics

Serving Size: 1 Practicum per Student

Servings per e-Magazine: 2

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Hours per Week per Student	Approximately 12
Campuses (El Paso)	1
Division	1

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Student

## Health Promotion & Behavioral Sciences

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Medication Literacy/Medication Errors	Tania Quiroz
Water Quality Assessment of Colonias	K. Michelle Semaan

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# Medication Literacy/Medication Errors

## Practicum Highlights

- HIV patients need information about their medicines in order to reduce medication errors
- The medication literacy curriculum promoted safe medication practices among Hispanic adults in the U.S.-Mexico border region.



Educational materials in Spanish were developed to educate participants about safe medication practices.



Photos courtesy of the Medication Literacy research team

## Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Education is the best way to decrease medication errors,
  - Inform the community in their native language.
  - Empower the community to communicate with health care providers
  - Develop the appropriate tools and programs to inform and educate patients.

## Sus Medicinas... Su Salud: Decreasing Medication Errors among Hispanic Spanish Speaking Adults

The main concern with medication errors is self-medication. Medications and dietary supplements are generally administered based to the user's ideas or the knowledge of a family member, the advice of a friend, or publicity. Older adults are active users of OTC and prescription medications and other products that increase the risk for negative health outcomes.

To decrease medication errors among Hispanic adults, a theory based medication literacy curriculum was developed to educate HIV patients about safe medication practices

### Public Health Significance

My practicum experience was related to the Public Health Essential Services (PHES) because the aims of the study were to identify health problems related to medication use, inform, educate, and empower the community to decrease medication errors, evaluate the effectiveness of the medication literacy curriculum and provide solution to health issues related to medications.

Some of my responsibilities were:

- To inform the clinic patients and staff about our study.
- To recruit participants for the interviews and focus groups
- To conduct interviews.

The final product of my practicum was a qualitative data analysis of all the interviews and focus groups.

The major findings were that HIV patients are not informing physicians about herbal products use, home remedies, and OTC medications. The community asked the research team to implement the curriculum to all patients in order to decrease medication errors.

Implementation of educational programs is needed to decrease medication errors among HIV Spanish Speaking adults.

A major consequence of multiple medication use is the possibility of interactions between the medications. This population has a high risk of medication errors and it can be decreased by providing the appropriate education and information

# Water Quality Assessment of Colonias



## Special events/ duties during your practicum

- Collaborating with other agencies to initiate project.
- Utilizing two separate public health fields, behavior health promotion and environmental health.

## Lessons Learned [OR] Advice for Future Students

- Be prepared to be flexible with changes and patient with unforeseen obstacles. These events can happen and can delay things, but overcoming them is possible.

## Assessment of Water Quality of Colonias within El Paso County

By: K. Michelle Semaan

The practicum focused on water quality of specific colonias within El Paso County. The colonias were selected based on their designation for development depending on their access to the El Paso County water supply. In order to assess the potential for persistent contamination of the water supply, the project focused on sampling water from various household water sources (tanks, groundwater

wells, etc). Viral infectivity will be determined to assess exposure to human adenovirus. Exposure can lead to diarrhea and other illnesses.

Water samples will be collected from participating households. Information regarding water source, storage and disinfecting measures will be collected. Samples will be assessed for pathogen contamination within the laboratory. Findings will be disseminated accordingly.

## Public Health Significance

The practicum experience focuses on several aspects of the Essential Services to Public Health. *Diagnose and Investigate* is the primary service. The project attempts to assess the potential health hazards within the targeted communities. The service is carried out by water quality assessment to determine pathogen risk.

The project then will *inform, educate and empower* residents found at risk of

contamination. Information regarding contamination hazards will be disseminated depending on exposure findings.

Findings will also be presented to the collaborating agencies, the Lower Valley Water District and The Colonias Initiative Program to help these improve resource accessibility and increase awareness regarding residents with limited or no access to water.



Project Funding was provided by the Hispanic Health Disparities Institute.

For more information regarding  
The University of Texas School of Public Health,  
Office of Public Health Practice  
and the practicum program, please visit:

<https://sph.uth.tmc.edu/practicum/>