Public Health Practice

Stories from the Field
The University of Texas School of Public Health Student Practicum Experiences Fall 2012 – Regional Campuses
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 ninth-edition e-magazine showcases student practicum experiences throughout the Fall 2012 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: 17

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<th>Hours per Week per Student</th>
<th>Approximately 12</th>
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#### Austin Regional Campus

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#### Dallas Regional Campus

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<td>Review: Contemporary Dental Practice</td>
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#### El Paso Regional Campus

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#### San Antonio Regional Campus

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<td>Pregnancy Prevention</td>
<td>Adrienne Carr</td>
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<td>Women, Homelessness, &amp; Addiction</td>
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St. David’s Evaluation of Elementary School Commercial Kitchens

An Evaluation to Assess the Impact of Installing Commercial Kitchen Equipment into Elementary Schools

By: Kristin Brookshire

The St. David’s Foundation granted monies to two elementary schools that serve low-income children in Austin, TX for the purpose of replacing outdated ready-to-serve style school kitchens with new commercial kitchen equipment.

The Foundation requested that UTSPH faculty evaluate the commercial kitchen project in order to determine what impact, if any, these new kitchens had on a variety of constructs, including diet. The evaluation began in fall of 2011 and will continue into 2013.

As an intern to the evaluation team, I was able to participate in many of the evaluation components including: assisting with an interview of kitchen management and staff; data input and analysis; conducting a literature review; assisting with lunch room observation data collection; and contributing to the Holiday 2012 Report for UT Elementary School.

Public Health Significance

The St. David’s Commercial Kitchen Evaluation falls into the 9th Essential Service of Public Health. This evaluation is ongoing for the purpose of justifying current and future resource allocation as well as identifying areas where the program can improve.

School lunch has become the object of the nation’s spotlight. Since television shows such as “Jamie Oliver’s Food Revolution” became a hit, and teachers and students alike began online blogging to provide daily photographic “proof” of the less than appetizing (and arguably unhealthy) menu items that many schools have to offer, attention is finally being given to child nutrition.

By replacing what was essentially re-heating equipment with commercial kitchen supplies, the two elementary schools funded by St. David’s were able to hire professional chefs who developed menus using fresh ingredients to cook their meals rather than relying on the typical oven-ready fare. One advantage of cooking from scratch is the increased level of control that the kitchen has to limit harmful ingredients such as excess sodium and fat.

With childhood obesity still a great public health concern, innovations such as the commercial kitchen project will more than likely continue to be put into practice.

Source: MS Office Clip Art
School Bullying & Behavioral Health

Practicum Highlights

- Examined data on bullying within the school district, reviewed current anti-bullying policies and procedures, and helped revise relevant forms.
- Helped create a plan to establish evidence-based procedures and programs for suicide prevention.
- Created and maintained resources lists that identify mental health resources within the local community and other resources for students who are at-risk.

Advice for Future Practicum Students

Don’t just settle for any practicum! Choose a topic you care about and find a site that will help you to explore this issue in a way that is meaningful to you.

Evaluation of anti-bullying and other relevant behavioral health policies and programs in a school setting.

By: Felicia Carey

This semester, I was able to work with the guidance and counseling department at Round Rock ISD. Through a mixture of independent work and collaborative effort, I’ve gained significant experience with behavioral health programs and policies in a school setting.

I was able to examine data from the most recent district bullying survey to see what trends and patterns in these behaviors are present among students. I also helped review current anti-bullying procedures to ensure that they were in accordance with newly enacted Texas anti-bullying policies, and revised relevant forms, such as those for reporting bullying incidents, so that they were more efficient and easier to use.

Another issue I addressed was the district’s need for better suicide prevention programming. Using guidelines for best practices, I helped to create a comprehensive plan that included prevention and intervention protocols, and guidelines for staff, parent, and student education on the topic of suicide.

Other projects I worked on included identifying local community resources to promote general adolescent mental health and identifying community resources to benefit at-risk students specifically, as well as a wide breadth of other topics relating to behaviors and issues relevant to the school environment that can affect the health of the students in the district.

Public Health Significance

My practicum experience addressed many of the Essential Services of Public Health, but a majority of my experience related to developing plans and policies to support community health efforts. Not only did I learn proper ways to approach public health planning within the administrative structure of a school, but I also found that these plans and policies are the backbone necessary to ensure the success of behavioral health interventions and prevention programs in a school setting.

My work at my practicum will affect public health in that the projects I contributed to can now be used to improve existing programs and can be incorporated into district policies related to behavioral health issues, such as bullying and suicide. These are both issues that are becoming increasingly problematic among adolescents, and as such, addressing them is both timely and relevant to student health.

Using these programs and policies, RRISD can also contribute to public health as well by improving detection of these issues among students, educating and empowering staff, parents, and students as to how they can take action, and linking those in need to community resources necessary to help improve the well-being of the school community at large.
An Intern’s Experience in Trauma Services

By: Adrienne Fung

For three semesters I have had the privilege of first volunteering, then doing my practicum in Trauma Services at Dell Children’s Medical Center in Austin Texas.

My premise for interning with the Trauma Research team for an extended period of time was to learn the process of conducting studies which otherwise, would have been difficult to learn in one semester.

Because of this, I was able to follow how projects are handled at different stages.

Examples of skills I acquired during the semesters: (1) Perform literature reviews to check if a study that we were interested in has been done before. (2) Learn how to submit a proposal through the Seton Hospital IRB committee (3). Perform secondary data analysis using STATA 12 on results from a completed survey.

Public Health Significance

The Trauma Research team is one of many divisions that comprise Trauma Services at Dell Children’s Hospital. Pediatric physicians, trauma nurses, social workers and researchers corroborate together to ensure a child’s health and safety.

Research is important because through clinical trials, investigations and surveys, we learn where our weaknesses in injury education lie.

As a result, we work to improve injury awareness and curb fewer incidences of childhood injury.

The studies that are conducted are published nationally in clinical journals so other communities can learn and benefit from our work as well.

Special thanks go my mentors in Trauma Research: Karla Lawson, PhD, MPH; Sarah Duzinski, MPH; Amanda Barczyk, PhD, MSW; Karen Piper, BS and Catherine Crocker, MPH.
Community Approach to promoting Healthy Behaviors

For my Practicum, I worked on an 8-week Community Challenge hosted by ACTIVE Life. This Community Challenge was a statewide initiative that worked to highlight what Texas Communities are doing to promote healthy lifestyles. Running from September 1st to October 31st, this Challenge was a way to highlight health events as well as encourage communities to adopt new programs and activities addressing the current obesity epidemic.

Working from Austin, the primary goal of my Practicum was to help promote and recruit individuals to participate in the Challenge. In doing so, I had to rely on my knowledge of the obesity epidemic and effectively communicate the importance of individual’s participation. I also helped develop the evaluation survey for the program.

This Practicum was a great learning experience for me. Working closely with the ACTIVE Life team, I acquired knowledge regarding community outreach tactics, how to evaluate a community program, and field experience showing me how real the obesity epidemic is throughout Texas. With my community proctor, Coco Valdez, we were able to take this information to identify barriers and showcase successful programs communities throughout the state have.

All graphics seen are taken from the online platform, www.hebcommunitychallenge.com. Participants uploaded the materials themselves as a way to earn points for their community.

Public Health Significance

The Obesity Crisis cripples many individuals throughout the world. If the current trends continue, by 2030 almost 90% of the adult population in the United States will be obese. Being an epidemiology student, I have learned that many acute and chronic diseases can be linked to weight status. Obese individuals are at risk for a plethora of diseases we study every day. Thus, I have found an interest in working to combat this epidemic in hopes of directly influencing the trends seen among other diseases.

The Top 3 Essential Services of Public Health this program served were:

1. Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues.
2. Mobilize community partnerships to identify and solve health problems.
3. Link people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable.

 Winning Communities after the 8-week challenge.

Advice for you….

When choosing your practicum, think seriously about what you want to gain from this opportunity (job skills, a potential position, networking). Your Practicum may be one of the best learning experiences you get!
Health Literacy & Health Communication

Opportunities & Accomplishments of a Health Literacy Internship

By: Sarah Seidel

- **Lead author** on Central Texas Healthcare Resource Guide, a comprehensive guide to medical services for the 5-county Austin area. **Organized focus groups** to assist in revision and promoted guide to local organizations through the **Directory Release Breakfast** and presentations at agency meetings.

Public Health Significance

What does it feel like to be Low Health Literate?

Pretend you are in a doctor’s office, waiting for the doctor. You are handed this paper regarding an upcoming procedure:

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Your nacckyhp has dethemnorco that you have a ypoconoloe. Ypoconoloe is a test for noloc reenac. It sevndon gnitesn an elbxelf gnuivev epocs into your muter. You must drink a lacesps diqpl the thgin eroefeb the noitanimaxe to nacle out your noloc.
```

Do you understand? How do you feel?

Health Literacy Forward accomplishes the following Essential Public Health Services:

- **Monitors** the status of health literacy in communities.
- **Informs** healthcare providers about health literacy and patient communication to improve care, promote health, and reduce hospital readmissions.
- **Educates** and **Empowers** patients and providers alike to address health literacy.
- **Mobilizes** Adult Educators to teach health literacy in the classroom.

Central Texas Healthcare Resource Directory Release Breakfast

Planned and hosted a release breakfast for 70+ local healthcare providers to promote health literacy and deliver directories.

- **Flexible Schedule & Ability to Work Remotely on Some Projects**
- **Opportunity to Promote Health Literacy and Healthcare Access & Navigation**
- **Learned Webpage Design (Joomla & K2)**

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Health Literacy Forward is the cross-sectoral health literacy initiative of the Literacy Coalition of Central Texas.

Central Texas 

Healthcare Resource Directory 

2012. 4th Edition

Fall 2012 • Sarah Seidel • Literacy Coalition of Central Texas • Health Literacy & Health Communication

*Images courtesy of [www.willread.org](http://www.willread.org)*
Helping Prevent Injuries in Children

By: Bradley Adams

Working in Injury Prevention has been a very rewarding experience, filled with a wide variety of projects and duties. One of the main ways that injuries were prevented was through donating, inspecting, and installing car seats. Every Monday people come to Children’s Medical Center, and can get their car seats inspected free of charge. If the family is low income, and can’t afford a car seat then they are given one free of charge.

Pedestrian safety is also a large part of the focus of this department at the beginning of every school year, and around Halloween. We shift our focus to getting out into the community, and educating both children and parents on how to properly walk to school, and around their community.

For my final project I developed a brochure that would be given to the families of children who had been bitten by dogs.

Public Health Significance

Inform, Educate and empower these three things were key aspects that guided almost every aspect of my practicum. Educating parents and children in the best ways to stay safe in many of the situations that children may find themselves in this includes in the car, on the way to school, at home, and at play. Many of the people that we come into contact have little to no idea about to keep their children safe. Car seats are a perfect example of this, many times we see families that aren’t aware of the laws regarding what type of seat their child should be in.

Special events during your practicum

- Working at The Dallas Zoo Halloween Nights educating kids on pedestrian safety
- Running in the “Red Balloon” 5K

Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Always be willing to go above and beyond what is needed of you
Access to healthcare in underserved areas

Practicum Highlights

- Made new friends and learned about the Hispanic culture
- Was involved in a program that provided free health services to over 2,500 people!

Binational Health Week Fair 2012

By: Gbemisola Cole

My practicum site was with DFW Area Health Education Center. DFW AHEC is an organization which focuses on increasing access to health care in underserved areas. One of the various ways this is achieved is through an annual health fair which brings together various health professionals from different fields to provide free health services to people who otherwise would have little or no access to it.

I was fortunate enough to be involved in this year’s health fair which took place on the 20th of Oct at the Mexican consulate in Dallas. My duties included program planning and attending to logistics for the event. I was also responsible for contacting vendors for the event. Upon completion of the program, I helped with evaluation to determine what could be done to make future programs even more successful.

Public Health Significance

Of the ten essential public health services, the one most related to the my practicum experience is - Linking people to needed personal health services and assuring the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable.

With 27% of its residents lacking health insurance, access to health care is a big issue in Texas. Among the Hispanic population, linguistic/cultural barriers and immigration status present additional hindrances to obtaining healthcare services. DFW AHEC recognizes this challenge and so they work in collaboration with the Mexican consulate and health providers in the DFW area to ensure the Latino community is able access preventative care and other services pertinent to health.

Apart from offering preventive care services on the day of the fair, the program also refers people to health providers, and informs and educates the public on available local health resources.

Advice for Future Practicum Students

The school website has some really cool practicum links. Start your search from there!
Today I Will... Motivate Behavior Change for Weight Loss

Practicum Highlights

- Helped to develop marketing strategy for The Cooper Institute’s weight-loss resource website TodayIWill.com.
- Assisted in event coordination for the Institute’s new course ambassador programs.
- Contributed blog topics for the Institute’s website.

Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Take advantage of every opportunity that your practicum provides, including learning new things you may not know you were interested in.
- Get to know everyone you can; utilize your practicum to build relationships that can be priceless in the future.
- A practicum provides you a one-of-a-kind, real world experience that will prepare you in ways beyond you can imagine – savor every moment!

Providing Tools to Help the Public & Practitioners Create Lasting Weight Loss Change

By: Julene Fleurmond

The community of people who make up the Cooper Institute is a vibrant mix of personalities who are truly passionate about making change in the lives of others. This diversity and commitment is what makes their work so impactful and why my experience at the Institute was so enriching.

The Cooper Institute has a variety of fitness and nutrition-related programs, classes and initiatives that target children and adults to help them to make better choices, become healthier and prevent disease.

During my practicum I was able to learn about and assist in many major projects of the Institute.

One such project I shadowed was the Healthy Schools initiative that helps schools to improve their wellness profiles. I also reviewed the education courses that train practitioners and physical trainers.

My final project consisted of creating recommendations and content for the weight-loss resource website TodayIWill.com. I worked alongside curriculum developers and the marketing team to come up with ideas that would improve the site for diversity and effectiveness.

My experience at the Cooper Institute was enjoyable not only in working within a field that interests me, but also being able to form relationships with some of the kindest & nurturing people I have ever met.

Public Health Significance

The work done at the Cooper Institute fits a number of the Essential Services of Public Health, including doing research for new insights and innovative solutions, and diagnosing and investigating health problems. The Institute has a database of scientific research that assists in creating new recommendations for the medical community and the public.

The Institute’s programs and resources also inform, educate, and empower people about health issues through education courses. The TodayIWill.com website also has weight loss tools for individuals and training for practitioners to help battle obesity.

From creating content to recommending marketing ideas, it was an honor to contribute to the work of the Cooper Institute, helping others to be healthier and Get Cooperized.
Disseminating Health Messages to Women and Girls in Region VI  

By: Erin Hauder

I completed my practicum at the Office of Women’s Health Region VI office which is under the Health and Human Services department. Region VI is comprised of Texas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. Initiatives on health topics including HIV/AIDS, heart health, breast cancer awareness and screening are passed down from the federal government to each regional office; it is then the job of each region to disseminate these messages to communities throughout their region. My primary responsibility was to help deliver public health messages throughout the region. I did this by attending local community health fairs, raising awareness about domestic violence by preparing a presentation for health care providers and community partners, and reviewing grant proposals to support projects throughout the region for National HIV/AIDS Day and to promote women’s cardiac health awareness in Latina communities.

Public Health Significance

I was fortunate enough to observe several essential public health services in action at the Office of Women’s Health (OWH).

Inform, Educate, and Empower: This is the main goal of OWH and through the use of community fairs, webinars, and presentations, I personally was able to be a part of each of these outlets to inform, educate, and empower people across the region.

Mobilize:

OWH mobilizes other departments within the office of Health and Human Services that have overlapping goals in public health. OWH closely works with the Office of Minority Health and the HIV/AIDS office to deliver the best resources and most up to date information to women and girls across Region VI.

Evaluate:

OWH evaluates public health projects throughout the region and provides funding only to groups that show innovation, are rooted in theory, and provide population-based health services.
Environmental Exposures and Factors Associated with Child Obesity

My practicum focused mainly on researching environmental exposures associated with child and adolescent obesity. Working with a pediatric endocrinologist, I looked at environmental factors that may contribute to child obesity—with particular emphasis on school environments and exposures.

CMC provides a multi-disciplinary approach (counseling, dietary advice, and medical intervention) to equip children and their families to reverse behaviors associated with obesity. By researching environmental exposures, CMC can better educate patients regarding situations that may be contributing to obesity.

Using data from the clinic, along with information from the literature review, we were able to co-author an abstract for presentation at a future pediatric conference.

Public Health Significance

The Essential Services of Public Health most closely related to my practicum were “investigating health problems in the community” and “research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.” The particular project I worked on was essentially a research project and literature review looking at environmental exposures in schools related to child and adolescent obesity.

Additionally, the obesity clinic at Children’s Medical Center serves a large percentage of children and families in lower socio-economic brackets. The clinic serves an important public health function by providing excellent care to these typically marginalized children and families. The physician I worked with is a stellar example of public health ethics as she works diligently to provide care for her patients no matter their background, and seeks to find innovative ways to improve care for them through her research.

Fall 2012 • Madeline Hommel • Children’s Medical Center • Child Obesity
The goal of this practicum is to evaluate the publication history of an open access PubMed listed Dental Journal: Journal of Contemporary Dental Practice - Jaypee Journals. This project is being carried out at Baylor College of Dentistry in Dallas.

"Evaluating the entire publication history of a scientific journal requires patience, discipline and determination to overcome obstacles. It is overwhelming initially but deeply satisfying upon reaching completion of the project."

Evaluation of Publication History of Journal of Contemporary Dental Practice - Jaypee Journals

The objective of my practicum is to conduct a qualitative analysis of the depth and breadth of the publication history of the Journal of Contemporary Dental Practice over the past 14 years of existence. We are required to explore the geographic origins, fields/specialties within dentistry and related subjects and examine distinctive trends in publication over time. As a final product of the practicum, we plan to develop and publish a report on the findings in a peer-reviewed journal. Evaluation of the journal is essential in order to learn about current oral health issues around the world and how they are being addressed in a systematic manner. I worked towards this aim by reviewing various background literature materials and having regular meetings with a variety of colleagues at Baylor College of Dentistry.

Public Health Significance

The two main public health services that come to mind in relation to my practicum are:

- Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.
- Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts.

Evaluation of the journal will help in learning about the issues facing the practice of dental health. Information gathered through this project can be utilized to postulate new hypothesis for oral health care and develop new intervention programs for not only the local community but around the globe. Insight into the current problems affecting modern dental practice will reduce complacency and heighten awareness on the part of dental practitioners.

Baylor College of Dentistry has always been concerned with the quality of oral health of the people of Dallas and neighboring cities through hospitals, clinics and community programs.

Legionella pneumophilla in dental unit water lines (http://www.thenextdds.com/uploadedImages/The_Next_DDS/Articles)
West Nile Virus Outbreak

Public Health Significance

Looking at the 10 essential services of public health, the two that relate closely to my practicum experience include the monitoring of health status to identify community health problems and informing, educating, and empowering people about health issues. Dallas County Health & Human Services serves to protect the health of citizens residing within Dallas County through primary prevention and health promotion efforts. Local authorities monitor all kinds of health conditions ranging from West Nile fever, to tuberculosis, to acute mercury poisoning.

The health department also contacts those who are suspected of contracting West Nile Virus, and through this I helped gather data and educated on preventive means of preventing mosquito bites (e.g., repellent use while outside, removal of stagnant water sources).

I worked alongside epidemiologists from Dallas County Health & Human Services in conducting this year’s West Nile Virus (WNV) investigation. The outbreak affected most of Dallas County during the time I began in August and was one of the more serious seasons recently recorded. It was a whirlwind experience observing how a county health department functioned during such an occurrence. I assisted the chief epidemiologist, Dr. Wendy Chung, with interviewing patients suspected of having West Nile fever or neuroinvasive disease, a more severe, progressive form. The department uses demographic data with the help of Epi Info™ software to compare current and previous years. This information is also used to devise more immediate intervention strategies, such as aerial mosquito spraying. My project was to compile all 2012 case data by zip code to better grasp the geographic magnitude of the outbreak within Dallas County. It was previously hypothesized that the higher incidence in inner ring areas of the county appeared so due to a higher population density. However, a closer look at the data may indicate that the more affluent, inner ring suburban areas of the county did, indeed, experience a higher burden of the virus after adjusting incidence rates.

Using geospatial data to better assess West Nile Virus disease burden in Dallas County, 2012

By: Jeffrey Lertdilok

I worked alongside epidemiologists from Dallas County Health & Human Services in conducting this year’s West Nile Virus (WNV) investigation. The outbreak affected most of Dallas County during the time I began in August and was one of the more serious seasons recently recorded. It was a whirlwind experience observing how a county health department functioned during such an occurrence. I assisted the chief epidemiologist, Dr. Wendy Chung, with interviewing patients suspected of having West Nile fever or neuroinvasive disease, a more severe, progressive form. The department uses demographic data with the help of Epi Info™ software to compare current and previous years. This information is also used to devise more immediate intervention strategies, such as aerial mosquito spraying. My project was to compile all 2012 case data by zip code to better grasp the geographic magnitude of the outbreak within Dallas County. It was previously hypothesized that the higher incidence in inner ring areas of the county appeared so due to a higher population density. However, a closer look at the data may indicate that the more affluent, inner ring suburban areas of the county did, indeed, experience a higher burden of the virus after adjusting incidence rates.

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I worked alongside epidemiologists from Dallas County Health & Human Services in conducting this year’s West Nile Virus (WNV) investigation. The outbreak affected most of Dallas County during the time I began in August and was one of the more serious seasons recently recorded. It was a whirlwind experience observing how a county health department functioned during such an occurrence. I assisted the chief epidemiologist, Dr. Wendy Chung, with interviewing patients suspected of having West Nile fever or neuroinvasive disease, a more severe, progressive form. The department uses demographic data with the help of Epi Info™ software to compare current and previous years. This information is also used to devise more immediate intervention strategies, such as aerial mosquito spraying. My project was to compile all 2012 case data by zip code to better grasp the geographic magnitude of the outbreak within Dallas County. It was previously hypothesized that the higher incidence in inner ring areas of the county appeared so due to a higher population density. However, a closer look at the data may indicate that the more affluent, inner ring suburban areas of the county did, indeed, experience a higher burden of the virus after adjusting incidence rates.

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Review of the Journal of Contemporary Dental Practice

By: Tayyaba Siddiqui

Evaluating the contemporary dental practice journal helped me to have the knowledge about the current oral health issues around the world and how the issues are being controlled in a systematic manner. The objective of my practicum is to conduct a qualitative analysis of the depth and breadth of the publication history of the Journal of Contemporary Dental Practice over the past 14 years of existence subjects.

By the help of this practicum, I am able to rethink about the issues that are causing by dental practice specially the one with the dental unit water line. I would question myself before I even consider reviewing any journal regarding contemporary dental practice on any particular subject. As the review of the articles goes along, I got acquainted myself with the research on the modern dental practice. With every meeting, we are doing our research on the topic.

Public Health Significance

The two main public health services with the relation of my practicum are:

- Diagnosis and investigation of health problems and dental health in the community.
- Evaluation of efficient, accessible and high-class quality of personal and population based health services.

It is significant if we examine the available health care services in the community to make sure that they are being practiced with the same ethical principles that led to their being in the first place. Contentment in any field can lead to numerous problems, especially when we cannot “see” the mayhem our actions may be causing. The kind of freedom in thinking would not only help us to broaden the horizon but also would make us do the research on the subject we are doing review about and we can also discuss that to our
Public Health Significance

This project is considered Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems and is considered an essential public health service (APHA.org).

CHWs (promotoras) which are considered a viable health care workforce will be studied in the environment of a public service agency (Parks and Recreation). A policy agenda will be established that supports the sustained integration of CHWs into community organizations such as Parks and Recreation.

Improving Lifestyles of El Pasoans

Improving Access & Utilization of Existing Resources for Healthful Living, Using Community Health Workers

By: SHERRIE WISE

I am working to help a low-income community have access to resources for healthy living, and to receive health education, social support, skills, and tools for heart-healthy lifestyles. This is important because this community is incredibly marginalized and one of the poorest in the nation.

Specifically, this project aims to reduce cardiovascular disease risk among Hispanics by using community health workers for the provision of social support, education, and navigation of available health resources.

Together with the El Paso Department of Parks and Recreation, the School of Public Health is developing a program to improve utilization of their parks and recreation centers, while providing additional CHW services.

If funded, this program will be implemented in 2014.

Practicum Highlights

- Facilitating access to city parks and recreation centers
- Using community health workers to provide health education, outreach, and social support
- Improving physical activity and dietary behavior to reduce heart disease risk

Advice for Future Students

- Organizations that are interested in knowing more and doing more are sometimes just waiting for the right person to take the lead. Be that person!

Healthy eating: choosemyplate.gov

Exercising in a Park: herald.com

Fall 2012 • Sherrie Wise • El Paso Parks and Recreation • Improving Lifestyles of El Pasoans
Educating teens and young adults on sexual health and unplanned pregnancy prevention
By Addie Carr

The rates of teenage pregnancy in San Antonio and South Texas are staggeringly high. The mission of Healthy Futures of Texas is to reduce the rates of teen and unplanned pregnancy. This is accomplished through community education. My primary responsibility during my internship was as a health educator, which meant that I would provide abstinence plus education to youth. I did this both as an assistant, as well as a lead health educator on specific lessons. In addition to classroom education, I also assisted in education classes at Haven for Hope.

Additional duties performed during my internship were data entry and management, maintenance and research for social media sites, and preparation for health fairs. I feel that through my practicum experience I helped to make a difference in our community.

Public Health Significance

I feel that of the 10 Essential Public Health Services, my practicum most closely relates to the 3rd which is to “inform, educate, and empower people about health issues.

Healthy Futures of Texas strives to promote evidence-based learning curriculums to help educate teens and young adults on how to make healthy decisions and avoid unplanned pregnancies. Through these curriculums, we are able to give teens the tools to take responsibility for their own health and future. As well as achieve dreams and forge healthy relationships along the way...all the while preventing unplanned pregnancy and STDs.

HFTX works with many different programs in San Antonio to ensure that the maximum number of at-risk youth are being educated and empowered using tools that have been proven effective. In my internship, I have learned a great deal about community education and establishing community partnerships to achieve a common goal.
Women, Homelessness and Addiction

Risk Factors Contributing to Homelessness and Substance Abuse in Women

By: Anh Nguyen

Twelve women (aged 22-57 years) participating in the residential and outpatient substance abuse recovery program at Alpha Home were recruited to participate in the qualitative study. With the intent of identifying risk factors that contribute to these women’s homelessness and past addiction, I interviewed them using semi-structured focus group interview script. The scripted questions formulated from previous researches on this subject.

Data was analyzed using Atlas.Ti and SPSS v.18. Results showed emergent themes such as mental illness, post-traumatic stress, history of physical and sexual abuse, and shame contributing to homelessness and substance abuse in these women.

In addition to highlighting the risk factors, the results from this study also emphasizes the misconceptions and stigma about the women that suffer from addiction.

A manuscript describing the findings, methodology and potential bias will be the final product.

Public Health Significance

The project focuses on diagnosing and investigating the socio-economic and biological factors that put women at higher risk to be homelessness and abuse drug.

Results showed emergent themes such as mental illness, post-traumatic stress, history of physical and sexual abuse, and shame as common risk factors leading to substance abuse and serving as barrier to treatment.

The next phase of our project is to collaborate with the community partner (Alpha Home residents) to create a curriculum that highlight these risk factors that put women at higher risk to abuse drugs leading to relapse.

By identifying and highlighting these risk factors, better intervention strategies can be further developed to prevent generations of addiction and homelessness and to reduce the public health burden that homelessness presents.

Special events/ duties during your practicum

- Able to discuss my thoughts with Ms. Julie Wisdom-Wilde, the CEO of Alpha Home.

Lessons Learned [OR] Advice for Future Students

- As trivial as it sounds, please make sure that the audio-recorder actually records your interview.
Chagas’ Disease in Texas

Chagas’ Disease In South-Central Texas, What is the Risk for Human Exposure?

By Edward J Wozniak DVM, PhD

This project involved conducting active surveillance for Triatomine bugs in a variety of habitats throughout Health Service Region 8. The bug species, where they were recovered, and their involvement in human exposure were recorded. A subset of each species was molecularly surveyed for Trypanosoma cruzi infection.

This work demonstrated the presence of 5 bug species with T. gerstaeki being the dominant species is HSR 8. The total number of bugs collected far exceeded my expectations (N=377). Triatomine bugs from HSR 8 had a high level of T. cruzi infection (>50% across species).

Most of the bugs recovered were found on or in human habitations and many were involved in human bites. Exposure to this dangerous parasite is possible in south-central Texas.

Public Health Significance

This practicum experience addressed the surveillance component of the Essential Services of Public Health.

This project effectively surveyed a region of Texas that ecologic models identified as having a possibly increased risk for Chagas’ disease exposure and confirmed the presence of dense populations of competent vectors with a high infection rate in and around human habitations.

This work resulted in the development of new surveillance tactics that can be used for these highly secretive creatures of the night.

Data on bug species and their infection status were shared with property owners and their medical providers to guide them in making critical decisions about the need for laboratory testing and/or treatment. This was facilitated by active collaboration between the University of Texas, The Texas Department of State Health Services and the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention.

Special events/duties during your practicum

• My observations on the behavior of live bugs were employed in the development of new surveillance tactics for triatomine bugs.

Lessons Learned

• Triatoma gerstaeki appears to be adapting (evolving?) to thrive on or around modern houses. Because of this, the rate of human exposure has likely been underestimated in the past.

• The State of Texas presently has Chagas’ Disease under consideration for addition to the list of reportable diseases in 2013.
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/