

Public Health Practice



Stories from the Field

The University of Texas School of Public Health
Student Practicum Experiences
Spring 2015 – Management, Policy & Community Health

Prevention diabetes safe kids clean water policy disaster response
cancer adolescent sexual health HIV/AIDS research obesity
alcohol empowerment vaccinations maternal & child health

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

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

This sixteenth-edition e-magazine showcases student practicum experiences throughout the Spring 2015 semester. (Prior semesters may be accessed through the e-book, a collection of student abstracts and e-magazines describing their experiences.)



Practicum Topics

Number of Students: 5

Hours per Week per Student	Approximately 12
Campuses (Houston)	1
Division	1

Student

Management, Policy & Community Health

San José Clinic: A Houston Safety-net Clinic	Luis Morales
Building Healthy Communities	Rebecca Geck
Genomics & Public Health	Christi Guerrini
Clinical Process Analysis Program	Hilda Sekabira
Pediatric TB: Public Health Issue or Not?	Padma Swamy

San José Clinic: A Houston Safety-net Clinic



Source: www.sanjoseclinic.org

Practicum Highlights

- Learned about safety-net clinics and how they operate
- A immeasurable opportunity to understand what are the patient population healthcare needs and how San Jose Clinic is approaching them
- A unique chance to see and appreciate the patient-clinic flow from eligibility to follow-up

Advice for Future Practicum Students

- This is an unmatched practicum to learn about healthcare administration
- You have the opportunity to interact with multiple departments and be an active part of their projects
- It is a wonderful place to be and all staff are committed to the mission: "To provide quality healthcare and education to those with limited access to such services in an environment that respects the dignity of each person."

Improving No-Show Rates in Chronic Disease Patients

By: Luis Garcia Morales

Since its foundation in 1922, San José Clinic has grown from a small frame house to a multi-level healthcare facility, becoming the leading charity care provider of quality healthcare services for the underserved in the Greater Houston area. San José Clinic's patients are all uninsured, and 60% live at or below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level.

I had the opportunity to focus on developing and implementing a new

policy that aims to reduce the no-show rates in a particular subgroup of the patient population within the medical department.

This policy focuses specifically on Hypertensive and Diabetic patients. San José Clinic is committed in helping them improve their current condition by promoting the importance of maintaining their regular follow-up appointments as well as educating patients about their medications and health conditions.

Public Health Significance

San José Clinic links people to needed personal health services and assures the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable. To do this San José Clinic provides specialty care like Cardiology, Dermatology, Endocrinology, Neurology, Pulmonology and many more.

In my practicum experience, I was able to see San José Clinic actively monitoring patients' health status to identify and solve community health problems as well as developing policies to improve access to care.

In efforts to strive into quality improvements, we created a new policy to ensure that chronic disease patients who come to the clinic are taking care of their health and learning about it. San José Clinic also informs, educates and empowers people about health issues.

To facilitate this education, San José Clinic is working on developing a Spanish version of their website to better reach the Hispanic community.

Building Healthy Communities



Evaluating a Community Education Program...

By: BECKY GECK

This semester I worked with the Healthy Communities department at CHI St. Luke's Healthy to evaluate one of the hospital's community education programs. In order to maintain tax-exempt status, CHI St. Luke's, along with all other non-profit hospitals, is required to conduct a community needs assessment every three years and demonstrate how it is addressing those identified community needs. The major need addressed by this program is patient education. To learn more about the program, I attended the community events and spent time with the nurses who run the program. I assisted them in developing a community event

request tool and in drafting a formal description of their program. At the end of the semester, I will provide recommendations to the community education team that may help the program run more efficiently.

Practicum Highlights

- *Having a well-educated preceptor willing to slow down and teach her students*
- *Participating in program planning in which several organizations were collaborating to improve the community*

Public Health Significance

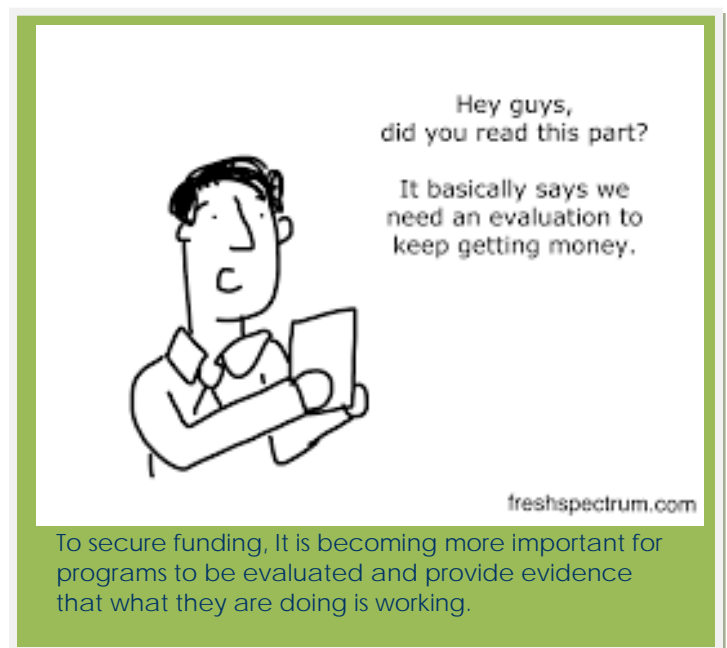
CHI St. Luke's Health System contributes to public health most obviously by providing medical care to patients. This includes a significant amount of charity care for those patients who cannot afford their medical bills. This is one way the hospital is working to improve access to care. One of the most impressive initiatives I witnessed at St. Luke's is a large research project involving multiple departments. They are all focused on improving the hospital's efficiency and quality of patient care.

The Healthy communities department is new and focuses on what the hospital system is doing for the surrounding community. It assists each hospital in conducting community needs assessments, which enables them to monitor and diagnose the health of the community. The department also serves as an outreach coordination center that helps connect the right hospital employees and departments with community organizations on a variety of projects and initiatives.

The program I worked with specifically does a great job informing, educating and empowering the community on issues related to stroke such as prevention, risk factors, and signs and symptoms.

Lessons Learned/Advice for Future Practicum Students

Understand the organization you are working with, what they want, and are willing to share with you. Be flexible and open-minded. Let them know you are there to help the organization and program, and are not trying to take away their jobs.



Genomics & Public Health



Founded in 1982, the Center for Medical Ethics and Health Policy at Baylor College of Medicine is one of the leading academic centers in the field of health policy. Many of its current policy initiatives are dedicated to genomics research and applications.

Next-Generation Genomic Sequencing: Policy and Public Health

By: **Christi J. Guerrini**

At BCM's Center for Medical Ethics and Health Policy, I participated in the PoliSeq research project, which is investigating the integration of next-generation genomic sequencing (NGS) into clinical care from a policy perspective. Specifically, I reviewed transcripts of interviews of key genomic leaders and identified areas of persistent confusion about relevant laws and regulations. Based on my

research findings, I developed a detailed outline of an article for a peer-reviewed journal that argues for the inclusion of legal modules in the continuing professional education of those who work in the NGS industry. The article also advocates for legal reform aimed at clarifying when genetic information is considered inherently individually identifiable and what researchers may do with that information.

Public Health Significance

This practicum experience relates to the following Essential Services of Public Health:

- Inform, educate, and empower people about public health issues
- Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts
- Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems

NGS is relevant to public health because it produces genetic data about individuals that, when compiled, can be used to conduct health

surveillance on populations, identify risks of populations to genetic diseases, and develop health education and intervention programs tailored to those risks.

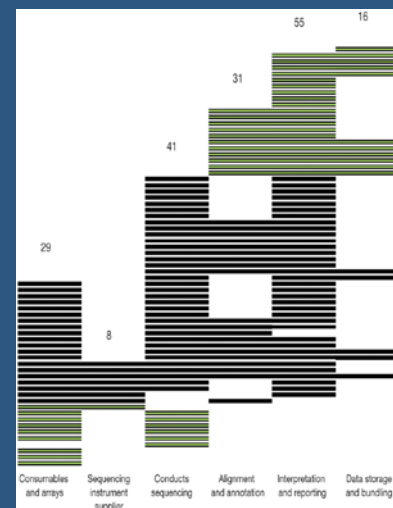
The PoliSeq project in particular contributes to public health by considering the social and policy consequences of widespread genetic sequencing and data collection and sharing. It also promotes public health by examining how relevant laws and regulations should be structured to balance the public's interest in genomic research and data sharing with individuals' interests in maintaining their privacy.

Special Activities

- Participated in weekly conference calls to discuss progress on the PoliSeq project.
- Attended policy roundtables during which key genomic leaders discussed NGS issues and solutions as part of a modified Delphi process.
- Helped draft the application for a supplement to the PoliSeq grant that will explore the role of patenting vis-à-vis NGS.

Advice for Future Students

- Do not underestimate the amount of time needed to understand the science of what you are investigating.
- Speak to scientists in the relevant field early on and whenever possible.



Companies that produce components for the NGS pipeline as identified by Center researchers in connection with PoliSeq. *Nature Biotechnology* 32, 980–982 (2014) doi:10.1038/nbt.3030.

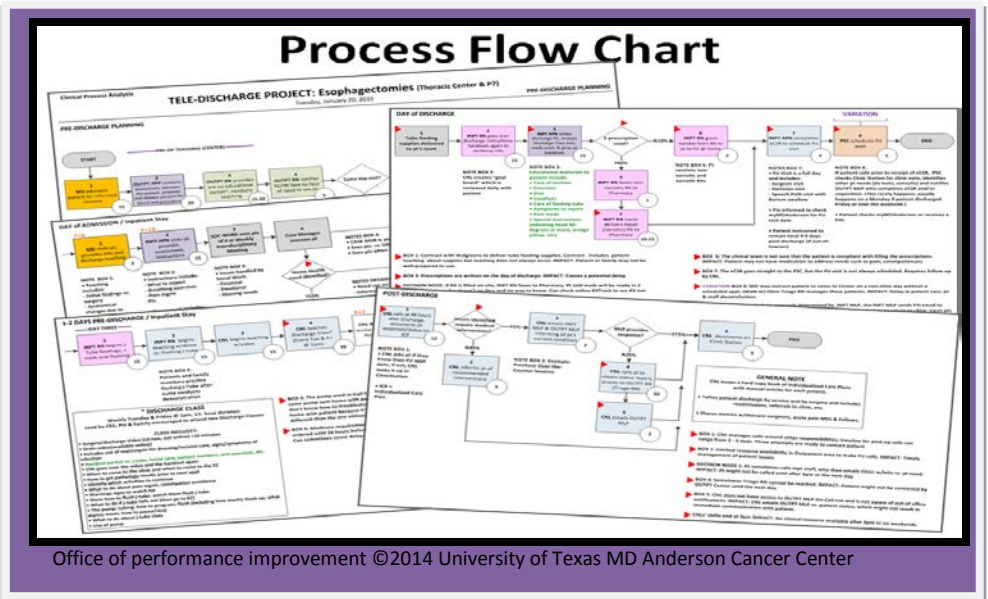
Clinical Process Analysis Program

Practicum Highlights

- Involved in the ongoing redesign phase of the Tele-discharge project – standardizing the discharge instructions process
- Participated in developing process flow maps for the ACCESS algorithms project – scheduling of patients
- Attended Clinical Safety and Effectiveness workshops
- Ability to calculate direct labor cost using process flow charts.
- Captured opportunities for improvement and categorized them for analysis using the IOM aims

Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Start looking for a practicum a semester before you register for it
- Find a practicum in your area of interest
- Talk to your friends and professors about options
- Pay attention to guest speakers. They are a good resource for practicum opportunities.
- A practicum may be an opportunity for future employment



Tele-discharge & Access Algorithms Projects

By: Hilda Sekabira

I was attached to the Clinical Process Analysis team in the Office of Performance Improvement (OPI). I joined the team in the redesign phase. I reviewed policies, participated in meetings, and did transcription for process flow charts. The tele-discharge project is still on-going and is expected to be completed in June.

I also had the opportunity to work on a 6-week project that involved developing sustainable, scalable access algorithms to help patient access staff meet new patient scheduling expectations.

My duties involved meeting with the project team to map out the process from a patient's initial call to scheduling an appointment; reviewing the maps and developing templates for the patient's continuum of care.

I have gained valuable knowledge and skills in clinical process analysis including importance of a project charter in defining the scope of a QI project, process mapping, and the PDSA cycle. One key lesson learned is the importance of the patient's experience in any quality improvement project that is implemented.

Public Health Significance

This project relates to the following American Public Health Association's 10 Essential services of Public Health:

- ❖ Enforces laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety;
- ❖ Assure a competent public health and personal health care workforce;
- ❖ Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility and quality of health services; and
- ❖ Research

The projects focus on (i) patients undergoing complex oncologic operations and (ii) new patient scheduling. Refining the discharge process to effectively monitor patients and address any perioperative complications as they arise decreases severity of complications and 30-day readmissions while improving quality of life after discharge. New patient scheduling will increase access to, and timely medical care and ultimately improve oncologic outcomes.

Pediatric TB: Public Health Issue or Not?



Butimba means hunter in siSwati. This project is funded by WHO TB REACH to increase pediatric TB case identification, and increase uptake of IPT (isoniazid prophylaxis). (Source: Baylor Children's Foundation- Swaziland and Butimba TB REACH)

Early Pediatric TB Case Identification

By: Padma Swamy

On what public health issue/topic did you work?

I worked in Swaziland which is a landlocked country surrounded by South Africa and Mozambique. This country has one of the world's highest prevalence of HIV and incidence of TB. Pediatric TB case identification has been difficult worldwide, but one which is garnering interest.

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

In order to increase pediatric TB case identification, reverse contact tracing with home visits are utilized. However, with children attending schools a novel school contact tracing program is starting to be implemented.

With which project were you involved? What were your duties?

I was involved in operational research data cleaning. I also helped arrange training for school program providers to create an exchange of ideas for the school contact tracing program.

Highlights from my practicum

- Cleaned indicators for operational research
- Conducted a training for school providers and had brainstorm session for school contact tracing
- Started MDR-TB contact clinic for early MDR-TB case identification

Public Health Significance

This project utilized different components of the 10 Essential Public Health Services. I was fortunate enough to partake and learn about several of these different components.

During my time, I have been able to inform and educate school nurses and clinical staff on common pediatric issues. In Swaziland, there is a belief that if you use an inhaler that you will die. We discussed the risks of using oral albuterol and the benefits of inhaled albuterol in order to increase uptake in the school nurses. We also provided them with anticipatory guidance on how to deal with refusal of inhalers.

Another component that I have been able to learn and partake is evaluation. I was able to help with the operational data cleaning and during the process I learnt about the importance of continual monitoring and evaluation in order to affect population health outcomes.

Through the TB REACH Project there has been data gathered to show community uptake of IPT. This has been low in the country and using this data allows for policy change and education opportunities. There is also an effort placed on making community linkages and this is also a key factor in changing health outcomes

Lessons Learned [OR] Advice for Future Practicum Students

The practicum is a great time to be able to develop your career and learn about public health in the field. I would recommend diving in and keeping your eyes aware of different opportunities!



Picture of the tool used to gather data in the field. Source Padma Swamy.

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/>