Public Health Practice

Stories from the Field
The University of Texas School of Public Health
Student Practicum Experiences
Summer 2015 – 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 seventeenth-edition e-magazine showcases student practicum experiences throughout the Summer 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:** 44

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

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<td>Hospital Epidemiology</td>
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<td>Harm Reduction in Austin, TX</td>
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### Brownsville Regional Campus

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<td>Breast Cancer Receptor Expression</td>
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<td>Food for Thought</td>
<td>Gilberto Martinez</td>
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<td>Combating Childhood Obesity</td>
<td>Michael Salinas</td>
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### Dallas Regional Campus

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<td>Housing and Malaria Infection</td>
<td>Regan Allen</td>
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<td>Inpatient Dermatology Consults</td>
<td>Mai Bedair</td>
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<td>Defying Diabetes: Engaging in Prevention</td>
<td>Mishi Bhushan</td>
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<td>Sunscreen Use Promotion</td>
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<td>Thromboembolism and Respiratory Disease</td>
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<td>Prenatal Breastfeeding Promotion Project</td>
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<td>Opioid Use and Misuse</td>
<td>Arpana Jaiswal</td>
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<td>Population Health Insurance Plans</td>
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<td>Food Insecurity among Food Bank Clients</td>
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<td>Diet and Physical Activity</td>
<td>Faith Onsongo</td>
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<td>Children’s Injury Prevention</td>
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<td>Office Phototherapy vs. Home Phototherapy</td>
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<td>Childhood Obesity in Early Childhood</td>
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<td>Health Education for Expecting Parents</td>
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**San Antonio Regional Campus**

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<td>Public Health in Air Force Aviators</td>
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<td>Complexity in the Family Medicine Clinic</td>
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<td>Barriers to Care Coordination</td>
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<td>Public Health in Family Medicine</td>
<td>Caroline Stephens</td>
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<td>Promoting a Healthy Lifestyle</td>
<td>Elisa Turner</td>
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**STEER**

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<td>Health Concerns on the Border</td>
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<td>STEER: Border Health in South Texas</td>
<td>Puja Gandhi</td>
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I started a meta-analysis of existing tools used to measure intimate partner violence (IPV).

While this meta-analysis is still in the literature review stages, the most important finding of this project to date is that many of the tools used to measure IPV are insufficient to capture IPV. The most widely used tool, the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS-2), is primarily designed to measure only discrete acts of physical violence and moreover measures these acts as equivalent without regard to the context of aggressive behavior in a relationship.

This points to a fundamental conceptual weakness in the IPV measurement literature; namely, that most of these measurement tools lack an analysis of power in which to contextualize violence as one of many potential tactics of abuse.

Focus on psychological violence

- Investigation of health effects of psychological violence
- Investigation into the development of tools used to measure psychological violence

Lessons Learned

The tools used to measure complex psychological phenomena—especially ones freighted with political meaning—cannot aspire to “objectivity.”
Afterschool Physical Activity Program

Developing Physical Activity Program Protocols and Quality Controls for Foundation Communities Learning Centers

By: Kathleen Galvin

This summer I worked with Foundation Communities to develop a series of physical activity protocols. I worked with each residential learning center coordinator on a protocol specific to the needs and challenges of their community.

The protocol provided details on the CATCH and Peer-Led Active Play activities and how they were implemented at each learning center. Through interaction with the learning center staff, I assisted them in the implementation of the protocol, and developed techniques related to the monitoring and training of the physical activity program.

After completing the protocols, I continued to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of the modified physical activity at each learning center, over the course of the practicum.

Public Health Significance

My practicum experience involved the development of policies and plans to support the physical activity component at Foundation Communities Learning Centers. The protocol is part of an overall plan to achieve the goal described in the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Children and Youth. The protocol provides a plan for each learning center to reach that specific goal. I also evaluated the effectiveness of the Learning Center staff in following the protocol, and gave feedback on how to achieve the physical activity goal.

Foundation Communities provides many essential services of Public Health. At their affordable housing residences, they provide free on-site support services for their residents to address their specific health needs. As well, they are actively involved in the education and empowerment of their community members with respect to health issues. Through partnerships in the larger community and the development of leadership within the residential community itself, Foundation Communities provides the links to support and engage community members in a healthier lifestyle.

Highlights

One highlight was participating in community wide health fairs at various residences. These health fairs were designed to provide immediate access to helpful information related to vaccines, obstetric services, and the health impacts of diabetes and other chronic diseases. Health screenings for diabetes, cholesterol, and vision were also provided at no cost.

By visiting each community, I was able to see many diverse parts of Austin. Working directly with the staff provided insight into the challenges and rewards of being part of a vital and complex community.

Advice

Be an active listener. When working in a community, be mindful that programs will vary in their implementation according to the resources and challenges unique to each group.
Patient Education and Management

By: Kristen Hall

This summer I had a great experience interning with Volunteer Healthcare Clinic in Austin. I had many different assignments to help with day-to-day clinic management as well as specific tasks based on my public health interests and my division – Health Promotion.

A major project that I helped organize was the Diabetic Blindness Prevention Program. For this project I made sure patients had up-to-date retina screenings, were educated on the matter, and were given a voucher for a new exam. I also created a short presentation on diabetic retinopathy to deliver to patients in the waiting room to educate them on the importance of retinal screenings and diabetes control.

I updated patient education and services information with new bulletin boards and also created new displays for patient education.

Lastly, I assisted with nutrition education, worked to organize the patient educational materials on a variety of topics, and helped update information on linking and referral services for dissemination to patients.

Public Health Significance

My practicum focused on three essential services of public health:

- Informing, educating and empowering individuals
- Community partnerships
- Linking people to needed services

The clinic plays a large role in helping underserved populations in these areas. A majority of patients are Spanish-speaking or other minority populations so there are many volunteers working as translators at the clinic. Patients are often below the federal poverty line and are referred to assistance and insurance programs as much as possible, as well as other area clinics when VHC is unable to help.

Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Don’t limit yourself to a single task that you are most interested or most comfortable with – you may find something new that you like or that will add valuable skills to your experience.
- Always offer to help and be willing to go outside your comfort zone.
- Be open to a different practicum site setting – like a nonprofit or clinic, where your internship can be very valuable to both you and the organization.
But does WWAD Texas Talk the Talk?

Program evaluation has a whole assesses if programs “talk the talk”. In terms of essential public health services, program evaluation “evaluates the effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services”. Further meaning are programs meeting their goals and objects to better the health of persons

This practicum opportunity meets another essential public health service as it “assures competent public and personal health care workforce” by the supervision received during the practicum. During the evaluation TMA asked participants about their current health concerns which “monitors health status to identify and solve community health problems”. At the beginning of each walk a doctor talks about health concerns to “inform, educate, and empower [walkers] about health issues”. Finally WWAD “mobilizes community partnerships and action to identify and solve health problems” by the relationships that develop between community agencies to host the walks and talks.

WWAD Texas Walks the Walk

By: Tira Hanrahan

Tira Hanrahan a MPH candidate the University of Texas Austin Regional Campus worked with Debra Heater at Texas Medical Association (TMA) to evaluate the institution’s Walk With A Doc (WWAD) Texas program. During her hours at TMA Tira went to various WWAD site around Texas, met with stakeholders to determine the project outcomes and goals, presented such at TMA’s quarterly meeting, met with professionals in the field of physical activity evaluation to determine the best way to evaluate WWAD Texas. Next Tira constructed questions to ask WWAD participants. In July the survey was distributed to both walkers and physicians. Recently Tira compiled and analyzed the results of the survey to determine if WWAD Texas are meeting their projected goals. Finally Tira will create a final report summarizing the survey findings and providing recommendations to further improve the program. This report will be presented to future funders and illustrate the program’s impact to future physician leaders.

WWAD Texas participants in Georgetown, TX. SOURCE: TMA

Highlights

- Meeting & learning from people in a variety of specialties: stakeholders, physical activity evaluation professionals, founder of WWAD, physician leaders, and most importantly the walkers!
- Collecting all of the data and seeing all the hard work come to fruition.

Looking Ahead

- Make sure you get along well with your supervisor. Parts of the practicum might be stressful so it’s important the chemistry with your supervisor will create balance instead of generate more stressful energy.
- Ensure you are getting what you want out of the practicum; it’s a resume builder & you are paying for it!

MPH candidate Tira Hanrahan and Supervisor Debra Heater at a walk in Tyler, TX. SOURCE: TMA
Community Health Evaluation

Practicum Highlights

- Working in the office and receiving valuable public health advice from several different members of the GAVA team, as well as a few laughs!
- Working the school farmstand and exchanging tasty recipes with parents

Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Work as many hours as you can early on in the experience! It allows you to meet the members of the team you’re working with sooner and you won’t be scrambling to get practicum hours late in the semester.

Evaluating Health Disparities in South Austin

By: Scott Kaufmann

For my practicum, I worked with the Go! Austin/Vamos! Austin (GAVA) project at the Michael and Susan Dell Center. GAVA is a project that works in the low income 78744 and 78745 zip codes of Austin, TX with an aim to raise access in the community to healthy foods and physical activity. Specifically, I worked with the evaluation team of GAVA to measure the effects that efforts have yielded to this point. I worked in all areas of evaluation during my practicum, including door-to-door data collection, park assessments, corner store assessments, and data entry. I also worked on a literature search related to efficacy of physical activity efforts in schools. This wide breadth of exposure to the project allowed me to see all the different ways that community evaluation can be conducted, as well as the sheer amount of work from so many people that is required to make it all happen. I also have a much better appreciation of the ways that evaluation can assist in intervention implementation.

Public Health Significance

My work with the GAVA evaluation team was especially concerned with two of the Essential Public Health Services: Monitoring Health and Evaluation.

Monitoring Health: Even though GAVA is in its third year of implementation, the evaluation team works as a way to constantly measure the health of south Austin through door-to-door surveys and community interviews. We also monitor community assets through park and corner store assessments, and all of this data is used to influence the direction of GAVA in future years.

Evaluation: The evaluation team of GAVA is also especially involved in evaluating the effects of GAVA’s implementation. Our surveys not only allow us to find public health areas of focus for implementation, but it also monitors the effectiveness of our implementation so far. Though we don’t necessarily expect sweeping changes in health behaviors throughout the community halfway through the project, tracking residents’ answers each year will show ways that GAVA is and is not working, as we will be able to constantly change to respond to the community’s opinion.

A school farmstand at one of the schools in GAVA’s purview. School farmstands allow busy parents to access healthy food for their families by conveniently setting up shop at their child’s school. GAVA focuses on granting better access to healthy food and physical activity in the 78744 and 78745 zip codes of Austin.

Image retrieved from: http://www.goaustinvamosaustin.org/english
Childhood Obesity in Latin America

Capacity Building in Latin America: Literature Analysis

By: Jessica Mason

As my practicum was through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, I was able to work remotely (aka in PJs) on this literature review.

The first step of the literature review required me to work closely with the librarian who conducted the database search. She was able to narrow the search to ~1300 articles based on the search criteria.

Next, I read each article’s abstract (or more) to glean whether it met the inclusion criteria and did not meet the exclusion criteria of the study.

Then, I compiled an Excel master list for both the included and excluded articles, and provided a coded explanation next to the excluded articles.

Public Health Significance

This literature review encapsulates many of the essential public health services as described by the CDC. The two principal services that are relatable to this project are diagnosing and investigating health problems and health hazards in the community, and evaluating effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services.

Many Latin Americans are facing a significant change in their food sources as processed foods are now cheaper and more readily available. This has caused a rapid increase in obesity in these areas. Obese children are much more likely to become obese adults, but there are many ways to introduce knowledge through school-based interventions and afterschool programs.

This literature review addresses what is currently being done in Latin America to research this epidemic and its potential solutions.

The CDC has consistently tackled epidemics on the national and international levels. This review is a part of a larger study that will address obesity in Latin America due to its growing significance and ramifications.

Special events/duties/highlights during your practicum

• Making my tight deadline of 6 weeks to classify 1300 articles.
• Having my first international conference call (a novelty now, but I’m not sure how long that will last…right, Dr. Kohl? !)

Lessons Learned:

Deadlines or goals may seem unobtainable, but they’re usually much smaller than they seem. Kind of like going back to our old elementary schools—they’re always bigger in our heads.

Lessons Learned:

http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/index.htm

Many of the reviewed interventions were school-based and focused on snacks, lunches and physical activity.

http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/index.htm
Preventing Pertussis in Texas

Assessing Infant Hospitalization Due to Pertussis in TX, 2013

By: KK McCaslin

For my practicum, I worked at the Emerging & Acute Infectious Disease Branch at the Department of State Health Services. It was my task to clean and assess Texas’ 2013 infant pertussis data. In my analysis, I was looking for risk factors for hospitalization due to pertussis.

Pertussis, also known as whooping cough, is a vaccine preventable disease that has high morbidity and mortality rates in the infant population. Mortality is greatest in infants aged 0 to 2 months due to not them not yet being eligible for vaccination.

Overall many infants are unvaccinated or not up to date on their vaccination schedules. Therefore research in this area is necessary to better understand the best means to control and prevent pertussis in the very young.

The findings from the analysis are to be presented at the 2015 Texas Immunization Conference.

Public Health Significance

The Essential Public Health Services that I performed at my practicum included investigating a public health problem in the community, and researching for new insights into a health problem. With 2013 being a peak year for pertussis in the state of Texas (most cases reported since 1959), it was essential that the data were examined closely to better prepare for future outbreaks.

This analysis can also contribute to new methods to improve outcomes of hospitalization due to pertussis. Vaccination of infants, close contacts, and mothers are the current means of control for infant pertussis. By better understanding what can be done to control and prevent infant pertussis, in addition to vaccination, more optimal outcomes can be expected.

The Emerging and Acute Infectious Disease Branch is responsible for infectious disease surveillance, investigation, and control in Texas. Preventing transmission and informing the public of outbreaks is essential in their contribution to public health.

Advice for Future Practicum Students

• Don’t be afraid to ask questions and be proactive in your project. Even when you’re working with professionals, you can always bring something to the table!

• Learn everything you can about your organization. It will give you a better understanding of what is most important to you in pursuing a public health career.

Practicum Highlights

• I had the opportunity to work with cohort data for cases of pertussis in Texas from 2013, an outbreak year.

Assure you’re doing everything possible to prevent infant pertussis. Get your child vaccinated at 2, 4, and 6 months of age.

Source: http://radioboston.wbur.org/2012/05/01/pertussison-rise
Improving health through connectivity

How changes to the built environment can influence health outcomes

By KRISTEN MUNSON

The Austin Parks Foundation (APF) is proposing to make improvements to existing urban trails, bike paths, and sidewalks on the city’s Eastside. The aim is to establish a 4-mile community trail that enhances connectivity between neighborhoods and creates an environment conducive to active transportation.

The World Health Organization recommends that municipalities invest in infrastructure that promotes physical activity as part of a broader strategy for reducing the global obesity epidemic. Building safe, complete streets and interconnected neighborhoods allows people to increase their physical activity through daily transit and benefits vulnerable populations who cannot drive.

My practicum with the APF involved developing a survey to identify the wants, needs, and concerns of individuals in the neighborhoods that could benefit from the project. This fall, the survey will be administered at a series of community meetings and I will conduct an analysis of the findings. I am also writing a white paper to assist the foundation in fundraising for the project.

Historically, East Austin has been an underserved area with fewer parks, trails, hospitals and grocery stores. The APF has conducted outreach to dozens of community leaders and organizations to gather feedback about the proposed project. They understand that community support is important for the project to move forward. It’s also critical for a health intervention to be successful. I am glad I could play a small part of this effort.

Advice for Future Students

Your practicum is an opportunity to learn about what you are passionate about as well as to build your skillset. Your practicum is an investment in time. Choose one that you believe can teach you the most. You may even get a thesis idea or data from the experience.
My final project was to create a RFP presentation deck for an in house Oil and Gas company. This included acquiring data from vendors, conducting projections and migration analyses, and developing an overall understanding of the company’s existing healthcare plans and services.

Special Events and Highlights during my Practicum experience

- Volunteering at the Ronald McDonald house in the Houston Medical Center
- Sitting in on a client meeting in which Mercer consultants were presenting to a benefits committee and other high level executives

Public Health Significance

My practicum experience incorporated the assessment and evaluation categories of the essential public health services. Mercer most closely performs essential public health service: 9. Mercer works with clients to evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services. Part of working with the total health management team incorporated accessing the use of health assessments, health screenings, and the use of tracking programs promoted by clients for employees to use. I was able to track the utilization rates and determine whether the client needed to increase awareness of disease management programs and track whether the use of these programs was beneficial to the employees. In addition, I was able to determine whether the client saved money from implementing the wellness initiatives.

Advice for Future Practicum Students

Reach out to as many individuals as you can, create connections, and have fun!

Mercer’s annual summer volunteer event. The interns and new hires coordinated a volunteer event in which we created a carnival style themed event for patients being treated at Houston’s medical center. Photo courtesy of Vintage Pixel Studio.
Nutrition, Exercise, & Oral Health for Adults with SMI

By: Kristen Raese

This past summer, I completed my practicum with the Region 4 Behavioral Health division in the Idaho Department of Health & Welfare. They help adults with severe mental illness (SMI) by providing support services and recovery programs.

The public health issue I worked on regarded the physical health of adult clients with SMI. I developed a survey and conducted a needs assessment on clients' physical health. Results indicated that over half had a health condition and that the top two were obesity and poor oral hygiene. Additionally, clients were most interested in learning about nutrition.

The final product included a list of resources and materials on healthy eating on a budget, exercise, and accessible dental clinics. A nutrition program for SMI clients was also recommended.

Public Health Significance

As a heavily stigmatized and underserved population, individuals with SMI, on average, live 25 years less than the general population. Preventable health problems such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes contribute to this inequality.

The Public Health Essential Service (PHES) that relates to my practicum experience is #7: “linking people to needed personal health services and assuring the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable”. This was done through my host organization by providing clients with SMI psychiatric medication management, counseling, and other services to help prevent recurrent hospitalization and incarceration. Many have nowhere else to go to receive help and support.

In addition, the resources and program I recommended in my final report will also be used to fulfill the PHES of “informing, educating, and empowering people about health issues” related to physical health.
Cooking Classes for Diabetics

Randomized Control Trial examines effectiveness of cooking classes to improve outcomes of Type II Diabetics

By: Beau Saccoccia

45 patients have been recruited to take part in a randomized control trial that examines whether cooking classes help diabetics manage their disease, compared to meeting with a dietician. The majority of my time has been spent recruiting patients and ensuring the patients who signed up for the classes follow through.

Public Health Significance

We are investigating a novel approach to the Type II Diabetes epidemic. If our study demonstrates a 0.5% reduction in HbA1C among people with diabetes, we can effectively claim efficacy of the treatment.

If this is a viable way to manage disease, we can encourage physicians to write prescriptions for cooking classes and export this model to other cities.

A pilot study of 27 people with diabetes were split into a control arm (meeting with a dietician) and an intervention (cooking classes)

Data demonstrated significant reduction in LDL cholesterol, Diastolic Blood Pressure, and total cholesterol.

Authors: Montelzun, D; Harlan, T; Saccoccia B et

Lessons Learned

Randomized Control Trials take a significant amount of resources and time to conduct

Behavior change is difficult to achieve

A major finding is that we have a 65% attrition rate among patients who sign up, but do not show up to classes. Of the patients who show up for one class, 2/3 complete the course. In other words, the hardest part is getting clients in the door.

I am working on ways to incentivize our program, from better advertisement of the healthy meals, to perhaps offering gift cards to those who show up.

The Goldring Center for Culinary Medicine is also involved in the teaching of nutrition to medical students. 15 schools, including UTHSC SA and Southwestern, have adopted the curriculum and are teaching it to their students.

HEB has partnered with Goldring to provide classes to many of its employees, and the curriculum has more promise for treatment of disease, training of health care providers, and corporate wellness programs.
Breast Cancer Disparities in the Austin Community

Practicum Highlights

- Texas Department of State Health Services 2015 Conference -- Addressing Disparities: Maximizing Access to Health Care
- Komen Austin 2015 grant profiles

Breast Cancer Disparities and Education

By: Kelsey Sanders

Komen Austin provides grants to different health organizations each year with their fundraising. They focus on disparate groups within the Austin area. I worked with the mission department that focuses on community outreach. We meet with the community to educate on breast cancer screening as well as how to find breast health services.

I was involved with closing up the final grant reports for the previous grant year. I compiled data on the past five grant years that tabulated the breast health services, total grants awarded, and who received the grants for that year. Komen Austin will be utilizing this data for their Community Profile and their Pink Gala. I also put together a presentation for the Texas Dept of State Health Services that my community preceptor presented at.

Public Health Significance

While I did experience most of the Essential Public Health Services, my practicum involvement really focused on the essential services of “inform[ing], educat[ing], and empower[ing] people about health issues” and “link[ing] people to needed personal health services and assur[ing] the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable.”

Many women in different disparate groups cannot pay for breast health screening services or even treatment for breast cancer. Komen Austin provides funding to health organizations that are specifically designed to target such groups.

Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Make sure that you are interested in the area your practicum deals in
- Don’t be afraid to talk with your faculty advisors about difficult situations with your community preceptors!
Characterizing Risks Associated with Thromboembolic Events by Studying Populations on Anticoagulants

By: IRENE TABAS

I worked at the University Medical Center Brackenridge Hospital, where I helped assess the risks associated with thromboembolic events by studying populations taking warfarin or novel oral anticoagulants (NOACs). I accomplished this by reviewing journal articles, writing literature reviews and protocols, and by doing data entry and analysis by reviewing medical records. The project I focused on was a retrospective, multi-center chart review regarding the efficacy of prothrombin complex concentrate (PCC), which reverses the effects of warfarin. The data set for this study was from all of the Seton sites, and my role was to review the patient charts for medical history, and to determine the reason for initial anticoagulation and the ultimate administration of PCC. The final product was an abstract that I am a co-author of, which was submitted to the Society of Critical Care Medicine. A total of 84 patients were included. Patients who received off-label PCC (when not used to reverse warfarin) had a trend toward increased all-cause, in-hospital mortality.

Public Health Significance

This practicum contributes to public health in a variety of ways:

1. Understanding the risks associated with prescribing anticoagulants among vulnerable populations
2. Reducing the burden of disease associated with the use of anticoagulants
3. Characterizing the efficacy of prothrombin complex concentrate (PCC)
4. Understanding competing risks associated with the risk of stroke and a recurrent bleed
5. Reducing the burden of disease associated with the use of anticoagulants

Clinical Trial

Vuzix Glasses Clinical Trial

- I helped an emergency department physician with a clinical trial regarding the use of Vuzix glasses
- With the glasses, the ED physician performs NIH stroke scale assessments on patients, while a neurologist on call performs the same assessment through the video call feature of the glasses

Take Detailed Notes and Stay Organized

- After learning how to review medical charts, the most important takeaway, in my opinion, is to take detailed notes regarding medical abbreviations

http://www.healthcarefacilities.today.com/media/graphics/2013/1930.jpg
Harm Reduction in Austin, TX

Practicum Highlights

- Unique one-on-one outreach with a hard to reach population
- Work done with highly experienced and nationally recognized individuals in the field of harm reduction
- Growing online presence significantly
- Tracking deadly drug trends in Austin, TX and creating resources for drug users and medical authorities

Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Do not be afraid to take an organization that you are working with now and turn it into a practicum opportunity. There are ways to make a practicum out of the things that you are interested in.

Reducing Harm to IV Drug Users in Austin

By: Jennifer Williams

While working with Austin Harm Reduction Coalition (AHRC), I had the opportunity to completely change my view on the drug using community.

AHRC works to address issues of infectious diseases that are commonly passed between drug users, namely HIV and Hepatitis C (HCV). They also seek to prevent harm caused by drugs that are especially harmful and untested, like synthetic marijuana.

In the summer of 2015 in Austin, the media covered what seemed to be a growing number of hospitalizations related to synthetic marijuana. I worked on creating a survey to better understand synthetic marijuana usage among IDUs. This has been my favorite project.

I engaged in weekly community outreach to IDUs to help educate about naloxone as well as provide resources to prevent HIV and Hep C. I also represented AHRC at an HIV Connection conference.

Public Health Significance

My practicum with AHRC embodies many of the Essential Services of Public Health. I created surveys to monitor the health of our clients, informed and educated clients on how to make healthy choices when consuming drugs, and mobilized community efforts through the use of social media and our website.

More specifically, AHRC most strongly exemplifies the “Inform, Educate, and Empower” service by practicing this to not only drug users, for the often ill-informed general public as well. Because of the nature of drug policy on a federal level, there is very little education about drugs available. Thus, many people are misinformed or completely uninformed. AHRC helps to not only educate people on the effects of various drugs and their dangers when used improperly, it also seeks to reduce the stigma that surrounds drug use. This stigma often leads to the relegation of drug users to the fringes of society. Instead, AHRC works to build trusting relationships with drug users in order to protect their health.
The practicum experience this summer involved working with a program manager to build managerial and operational knowledge and skills. I was also allowed the opportunity to contribute towards the reworking of a new program agreement between UT-Health and The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. My project goal was to modify and update affiliation agreements between both universities as a means of sustaining academic policy guidelines. I was also able to perform a local job analysis in regard to populations that could be affected by the sustainability of the policy agreement. This research would later be utilized by the program manager as contributing support for the viability of the practicum project. The primary areas of public health that I worked under would be classified as management and policy. Practicum duties included independent research, analysis, and policy development.

**Public Health Significance**

The practicum experience gave in depth exposure towards planning and policy development. It was interesting to discover that policy agreements between institutions often times go through several rewrites and must be approved by several parties before producing a final product, even then they are referred to as living documents which constantly need to be reevaluated to maintain their relevancy and integrity.

Although the focus was policy development, the aim of the program agreement was to produce a defined framework that both universities would agree to abide by. The future implications of the agreement would lead to producing a highly specialized healthcare workforce within the Rio Grande Valley area. Students would benefit from diverse areas of specialization from both institutions. Those areas of expertise would incorporate business administration and public health knowledge.

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**Special events/duties during your practicum**

- Analyze existing policy frameworks
- Program development and strategic planning

**Advice for Future Students**

- Meet with your community preceptor in person if possible before beginning your practicum and be sure to brainstorm possible final project ideas beforehand to ensure your objectives are attainable
- Network with coworkers and build a professional rapport with your community preceptor
- Find a practicum site that matches your interest area
- Keep in contact with your advisor during your practicum experience they can provide support during your work experience

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*Photo Source: www.ccga.edu/policy Special events*

- Duties during your practicum
- Summer 2015 • Jason A. Betancourt • UTHSC-H • Policy Agreement*
Breast Cancer Receptor Expression

I began my practicum at the cancer/tumor registry a few months after they had received news of the Commission on Cancer accreditation. With this new accreditation the hospital must strive to develop the best educational resources, offer useful training opportunities, advocate for their patients, and stay up to date on the latest cancer care trends and treatment. My main duty was to develop a research proposal and paper from a hypothesis suggested by two physicians. Using the knowledge obtained throughout my public health curriculum, I drafted a proposal on breast cancer tumor receptor expression in the Hispanic female population. After conducting a literature review, I collected and organized the data from the registry’s database that I would analyze. Once I had everything together the final project of my practicum was to create a research paper and present my findings to the Cancer Committee.

Receptor expression of invasive breast cancer tumors in Hispanic women in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

Public Health Significance

Among the Hispanic female population, breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death. Breast cancer is a heterogeneous cancer consisting of a number of subtypes that appear to have distinct risk factors, molecular characteristics, and response to treatment. Breast cancer subtyping is dependent on the expression of 3 molecular markers. A cancer biopsy is tested for estrogen receptor (ER), progesterone receptor (PR), and human epidermal growth factor 2 (HER’s-2) receptor expressions. These three receptors play a vital part in tumor growth and treatment prognosis.

The results of this study could potentially shed light on the individual minority breast cancer risk factors; raise awareness, and possibly cause behavior changes resulting in a decrease of disease incidence.

Doctor’s Hospital at Renaissance – Cancer Center is one of 8 cancer treatment hospitals in South Texas. As a newly accredited Commission on Cancer center program (CoC), DHR takes a multidisciplinary approach to treating cancer as a complex group of diseases that requires consultation among surgeons, medical and radiation oncologists, diagnostic radiologists, pathologists, and other cancer specialists. *Cite: Doctors Hospital at Renaissance. 30 July 2015. <http://www.dhr-rgv.com/Healthcare-Services/Cancer-Center-at-Renaissance.aspx>.

Special events:

- Hispanic Cancer Symposium: Presentations from professionals that identify information for the implementation of best practices to aid in the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of cancer.

- Tumor Board Meetings: Physicians of different specialties gather to discuss and make their treatment recommendations on prospective and retrospective cancer cases.

Lessons Learned:

- What you learn out of your practicum experience is hugely dependent on you.
- You might start with one objective but given the site, your interests might change.
- Apply content learned in courses whenever the opportunity is given.
- Learn to be both a follower and a leader.

TRIPLE NEGATIVE CANCER CELL

Triple negative breast cancer subtype can be more aggressive and difficult to treat, since the hormone receptors fueling the tumor growth are absent. Early detection and treatment is critical in disease prognosis. *Cite: National Breast Cancer Foundation, Inc. 30 July 2015. <http://www.nationalbreastcancer.org/triple-negative-breast-cancer>.
Public Health Significance

The Public Health Essentials emphasized in my practicum are:

1. To enforce laws and regulations to protect health and ensure safety of the public.
2. To inform, educate, and empower people about health issues so they can develop intrinsic motivations to comply with health codes.

My supervisor and I were surprised to see the high percentage of businesses complying with health codes after giving a second opportunity, after the education given. According to my supervisor, business owners will do anything to avoid a ticket. Although there is truth in his words, the importance is to have those businesses complying with health codes to promote public health.

Special events

- Collaborating with the Cameron County Health Department to fight a current mosquito problem.
- Participating in safety training of city employees for handling chemicals (pesticides) that are used to kill mosquitos.
- Since McAllen is a booming business area, I participated in creating a presentation for business owners related to the opening process of a new business (restaurants in particular), and explained the importance of health code compliance and expectations.

Advice for future students

- Be ready to work on any assignment since health code enforcement is broad.
- Don’t be shy, you will be working with the public on several projects.

Educating Food Establishment Owners on the Importance of Health Code Compliance

At the Health and Code Enforcement Department for the City of McAllen, I had the opportunity to inspect all the businesses that sell food and drinks in the city, to ensure health code compliance and promote public health.

In short, my mission was to find the highest number and type of demerits done by the average food selling facility, and to educate the business owner about the public health importance of complying with those codes.

After using an educational approach, business owners and workers seem to appreciate more, they built a positive relationship with the inspectors, and seem to comply with health code ordinance. After finding demerits in a business and implementing this approach (without giving tickets), we did a second visit to the business and found that 95% of the businesses took the opportunity to correct the problem.

Combating Childhood Obesity

Using MEND to Promote Healthy Living

By: Michael Salinas

One of the main focuses with the MEND program was to help promote healthy behaviors, especially to kids between the ages of 7 through 13. This is because childhood obesity is starting to become more prevalent through the increase of sedentary behaviors exhibited by children such as watching TV, more often, playing video games, etc. I was asked to attend multiple sessions and help with coordinating lesson plans based on nutrition and exercise for the kids that signed up for the program. We also wanted to get the parents involved as well because they are their children’s number one source of support. We wanted to provide them with the tools and education in order for them to promote healthy living right at their own home. We felt that the kids involved in the program really enjoyed themselves and were able to take away important information about food and exercise.

Special events/duties/highlights during your practicum

• Playing with the kids outside made me feel like a kid again.
• Teaching kids the importance of certain food groups

Lessons Learned [OR] Advice for Future Practicum Students

One of the lessons I learned while being a part of MEND is that you can make a difference in anybody no matter what their age is. Exercise and good nutrition are vital in maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Public Health Significance

Childhood obesity has grown significantly over the past 20 to 30 years and has begun to take a major toll on the health effects of children. With significant risk factors coming into play such as an increase in high blood pressure, high cholesterol, cardiovascular disease, etc., there is a need for prevention-based programs that can help alleviate some of these oppressing issues that are currently affecting families around the country and even the world. The MEND program helps with identifying the health status within the community that has a high prevalence of obesity and promotes healthy behaviors that can be reproduced at home or in the environment. It builds a strong sense of education and understanding of how obesity affects the parent’s child and what parents can do in order to help their child combat this disease. One of the main things that is taught to the families is that they have the power to help alleviate this crisis with the given information and education by going to the program sites. The program itself helps provide an in-depth approach of what certain food groups should be eaten in excess and which ones to avoid. It provides extensive knowledge as to why certain foods should be eaten sparing and the importance of exercise.

*Photo courtesy of Twitter @

MEND is an acronym that stands for:
Mind
Exercise
Nutrition
DO IT!
The key highlights of what it takes to be a MEND participant.

*Photo courtesy of Twitter @

*Photo courtesy of mendfoundation.org
Housing and Malaria Infection

Practicum Highlights

- I became more proficient in using STATA to clean and analyze data.
- I learned the importance of teamwork in an academic setting. Even on a small scale, addressing and attempting to solve public health problems requires the expertise and talent of many dedicated individuals.

Advice for Future Practicum Students

Choose a practicum experience that pushes you outside of your comfort zone and encourages you to learn a new, valuable skill.

Housing as a risk factor for malaria infection

By: Regan Allen

Working alongside a physician and researcher in the Pediatric Infectious Disease department at UT Southwestern Medical Center, I dedicated my practicum experience to a malaria elimination project in Swaziland. Using data from passive and reactive case detection efforts, the study aimed to determine if and to what extent housing conditions were associated with individual-level malaria infection.

My role consisted mainly of analyzing and organizing data using STATA, reviewing relevant literature, and beginning the process of reporting the results in a paper. Briefly, the study found a significant association between poor quality housing and increased risk for malaria infection. These findings suggest that interventions to improve housing conditions could reduce malaria transmission in eliminating countries.

Public Health Significance

My practicum exemplified the following essential public health services:

1. Monitor health to identify and solve community health problems. The project involved the analysis of data related to the health status of a community. Through the determination of significant sociodemographic and environmental risk factors, we provided evidence that may influence a future target of malaria elimination intervention efforts.

2. Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems. The research detailing the association between housing quality and malaria transmission in countries in the process of eliminating malaria is growing, but not yet robust. This project is gratifyingly translational in nature. The relatively new finding that poor housing is a significant risk factor for infection suggests that these countries should invest in building proper infrastructure, especially in the most impoverished communities.
Inpatient Dermatology Consults

Practicum Highlights

- Systematic chart review of inpatient dermatology consultations in 3 hospitals
- Determined that dermatitis was the leading diagnosis in inpatient dermatology consultations
- Presented work to peers and a large group of faculty at a UTSW dermatology meeting.

Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Start planning for your practicum EARLY to ensure a smooth and productive semester.
- Be flexible. Sometimes situations change and are out of your control. Adapt and move on.
- Fully engage in your project.
- Attend all the meetings you are invited to in order to make connections and friends.

Dermatology Consultations in an Urban Medical Center

By: Mai Bedair

During my practicum, I was able to conduct an extensive chart review to analyze the characteristics of all inpatient, 2013 dermatology consultations at 3 hospitals affiliated with UTSW Medical Center. By analyzing the characteristics of these consults, we hoped to better identify the community’s need for dermatology services and the medical school’s educational needs for students and residents.

Specifically, I was involved in identifying and fixing errors in the initial chart review completed by another student. I was responsible for ensuring that all the data abstraction was correct and that any questionable diagnoses were addressed.

I also did the primary statistical analysis on the data collected.

The final product of my practicum was intended to be an academic paper ready for publication. However, that is still a work in progress. Nonetheless, I was given the opportunity to present my preliminary results to a large group of faculty and peers.

Through the practicum, we found out that better services need to be developed for people with dermatitis. We also discovered that medical student and residents need additional education on the characteristics of malignant versus benign skin growth.

My project helped determine that dermatitis is the leading skin condition prevalent in patients in all 3 of the hospitals analyzed. This will allow UTSW and community dermatologist to ensure that enough resources are put into the treatment of numerous types of dermatitis in the community.

We also identified a gap in knowledge of malignant vs. benign skin growth in numerous providers. This will likely be addressed through education reform.

Public Health Significance

My practicum addressed two essential health services. By analyzing the consultations, I was able to investigate dermatological health problems in the Dallas community. Additionally, my practicum strove to ensure the maintenance of a competent public and personal health care workforce by assessing any gaps of essential knowledge present in the medical community.

Photo from Princeton Community Hospital
http://www.pchonline.org/ourservices/inpatient.aspx
Defying Diabetes: Engaging in Prevention

Practicum Highlights

- Working on a research study from the ground up
- Observing and noting patients’ illness experience through attending the MOVE! program for the last 5 weeks of my 10 week stay
- Exploring Ann Arbor! There were so many fun summer festivals that created a lively scene
- The MICH program and my peers who made the summer enjoyable

Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Explore the possibilities—don’t just look at your school’s website for opportunities when looking for practicum sites
- Be Creative, Be Innovative—You’ll notice that a lot of your research integrates with MPH coursework such as health psychology, public health, and behavioral economics, so don’t be afraid to ask your own question

From the ground up: Improving Veteran engagement in diabetes prevention

By: Mishi Bhushan

The “Improving Veteran Engagement in Diabetes Prevention” aims to not only describe at-risk Veteran’s engagement in behaviors to prevent T2DM and the mediators of this engagement, but also to examine the effects of receipt of a prediabetes diagnosis on at-risk Veteran’s weight and behavior change to prevent T2DM.

This summer, I have had the chance to explore the process of research design. I have helped to refine the study protocol, researched possible adverse effects, looked into possible inclusion or exclusion criteria, designed an informed consent form, and written up the health promotion literature talking points for the experimental and control groups.

My involvement in the groundwork of this research process has given me insight into the fine intricacies of research design, as I’ve found that it’s a lot less intuitive than one would think.

I have also been given the opportunity to observe the MOVE! program at the Ann Arbor VA, which has provided great insight into many of the barriers involved in maintaining motivation for physical activity and diet to prevent chronic illnesses.

Public Health Significance

About 1 in 4 Veterans Health Administration (VHA) patients has type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) [1], which is the leading cause of blindness, amputations, and end stage renal disease among Veterans and is associated with a 2-fold increase in annual mortality rates and contributes to substantial costs within the VHA.

Finding effective strategies to prevent diabetes will help us reduce the burden this disease has on our health care system.

The VA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention has several resources about healthy living and focuses on 9 Health Living messages that include topics from eating wisely to managing stress.

http://www.prevention.va.gov/Health_Living/nine_healthy_living_messages.asp
Sunscreen Use Promotion

Highlights

• One of the most memorable things from this practicum was when survey participants would ask for more information about photoaging and sunscreen use. One respondent even went out to buy sunscreen after taking the survey!
• My favorite survey location has been Klyde Warren Park. There were so many people, and almost all of them wanted to help.

Public Health Significance

One of the Essential Services of Public Health was to educate the public about health issues (www.cdc.gov). This practicum is directly related to this service as the results from our study will inform public health how to more effectively send messages about sunscreen use.

Currently, despite the availability of skin cancer prevention messages in the community, skin cancer is still the most prevalent form of cancer in the US today (http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin/statistics/). As such, skin cancer is a major public health issue. Because sunscreen can help prevent skin cancer, our work in understanding how to better promote sunscreen use will help protect many Americans against this deadly disease.

Aside from this practicum project, UT Southwestern is engaging in a variety of other disease prevention research.

Sunscreen, They Name is Vanity: The Relationship Between Sunscreen Use and Photoaging Knowledge

For this practicum, I worked with the UT Southwestern Department of Dermatology to survey the Dallas community about their sunscreen use and photoaging knowledge.

My work was related to skin cancer prevention, specifically on how we can better tailor our sunscreen messages.

To assess the relationship between sunscreen use and photoaging knowledge and beliefs, I worked with my mentor to develop a cross-sectional survey that was distributed in paper form to the Dallas community at UTSW and local grocery stores and parks.

For this project, I am going through all the steps of the research process under the guidance of my mentor, starting from project selection and ending hopefully with a publication.

Advice for Future Students

• Pick a topic that you’re passionate about because it’ll make the work way more fun!
• Don’t wait to schedule routine meetings with your mentor. Scheduling standing meetings early in the summer can save you a lot of time later on when you’re much busier.
Thromboembolism in Adults

Practicum highlights
- Data extraction
- Searching for relevant articles and contributing in writing background of the study
- Collaborating with people of different backgrounds.

Lesson Learned
- Patience, collaboration, and paying attention to the details are important for success in practicum

Public Health Significance
Part of Public Health Essential Services that relates to my practicum experience is research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems. Our research examines an important health problem, thromboembolism. Thromboembolism is a major predictor of stroke and heart attack. Stroke is a third leading cause of death and also a leading cause of disability in the United States.

If the study finding is disseminated, new insights on thromboembolism may help design innovative preventive measures for stroke worldwide and hence will reduce burden of stroke in the population all over the world.

http://www.ayassresearchcenter.com/
Thromboembolism and Respiratory Disease

Research at the Ayass Lung Clinic

By: Nicholas Garza

If over the summer I had the privilege to do my practicum at the Ayass Lung Clinic as a research assistant, I assisted on a project that looked at potential links between thromboembolism and respiratory disease, and how particular biomarkers could be useful indicators. Under the direction of Dr. Gul Nowshad and Dr. Mohamad Ayass, I participated in abstracting data from medical records and inputting it into a database with respect to multiple variables that could be used on multiple projects in the future.

After the data analysis, I assisted Dr. Gul with the literature review and contributed in writing portions of the paper on thromboembolism and its association with respiratory disease.

Public Health Significance

One of the essential Public Health Services according to the CDC is to “research new insights and innovative solutions for public health.” My practicum with Dr. Nowshad, and the work of at the Ayass Lung Clinic fills this need by aiming to find better ways to identify patients at risk for a variety of ailments.

The paper that I worked on Dr. Gul highlights the fact that biomarkers that indicate thromboembolism and risk for other cardiac events such as heart attack and stroke are also present in many respiratory patients.

This is significant for public health because most respiratory patients are not screened for other potentially life threatening cardiac conditions. Research done in connection with the Ayass Lung Clinic hopes to provide better and more comprehensive diagnosis for improved quality of life to patients in the public health system.

Highlights of my time at the Ayass Lung Clinic

- Traveling to San Angelo, TX to abstract data from medical records in the lung clinic
- Using the collected data to contribute to an abstract that was accepted at a CDC conference.

Advice for Future Students

- Choosing a practicum that matched my interests really made all the difference. If you can, pick your practicum site based on what you want to do in the real world – it will give you a great feel for how your skills will translate to your career.
Promoting Breastfeeding to Reduce Childhood Obesity

By: CAMI HEBERT

The DFW Prenatal Breastfeeding Promotion Project, endorsed by the Texas Pediatric Society, helps local Ob/Gyn offices educate, support, and encourage moms to breastfeed their baby, utilizing training from the “Be Our Voice” campaign, in an effort to reduce childhood obesity. Studies have shown that children who are breastfed have a lower risk of obesity, and the longer that breastfeeding is maintained, the more protective for the child\(^1\)\(^2\).

Surveys are administered to moms in the first and third trimester to gauge the effectiveness of the intervention on moms’ knowledge of, comfort with, and intentions regarding breastfeeding.

As the final product for my practicum experience, I analyzed survey results and created a poster presentation for the Texas Pediatric Society Annual Medical Student ePoster Competition, which will be presented at the TPS Annual Meeting in October 2015.

Preliminary results show that the percentage of mothers desiring more information about breastfeeding decreased from 72% in the first trimester to only 17% in the third trimester, indicating that the project is successfully providing needed and desired information to expectant mothers.

Future efforts can be focused toward providing resources that moms still report that they are lacking, such as breastfeeding classes and breastfeeding mom support groups.

Public Health Significance

The CDC Essential Services of Public Health that this project addresses are to inform, educate, and empower people about health issues, and to link, assure, and evaluate health services.

The project directly trains physicians, nurses, and staff at Ob/Gyn offices to encourage breastfeeding in their clinics and to offer community support resources to patients. It aims to increase moms’ breastfeeding knowledge and comfort and thereby improve breastfeeding rates in the populations we work with in an effort to reduce childhood obesity, which is a national public health epidemic and crisis that is in need of address.

The project will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of our intervention and tailor our approach to best meet the needs of our community.

References

Association of Opioid Misuse, Depression and Chronic Pain Location

By: Arpana Jaiswal

Opioid epidemic is a major public health concern. CDC has published a data showing increased opioid sales and overdose death from 1999-2010, with opioid death tripling between 1999 to 2008.

Department of Family and Community Medicine, St. Louis University are doing extensive research on opioid epidemic and various factors that can affect it.

These finding will help in implementing effective strategies to handle opioid misuse in chronic pain patients.

I conducted a cross-sectional study of 122 chronic pain patients, to find association between pain location and opioid misuse. I analyzed data, collected by a pain clinic and wrote a manuscript. Once the manuscript is finalized, the study will be sent for peer review and publication however, that would happen after practicum dates.

Public Health Significance

Saint Louis University and SLU care physicians together provide these essential Public health services:

- Research for new insight and innovative studies to health problem.
- Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazard in the community.
- Monitor health status to solve community health problems.

My practicum has given me deeper knowledge of the existing opioid epidemic. The skills I gained from this practicum has given me confidence in my abilities to investigate health problem and conduct independent analysis.

The outcome of my research will help to direct further research in opioid misuse and pain location. And help health care provider to identify high risk patient while prescribing opioids.
Population Health Insurance Plans

Why Health Systems create health plans

By: Meily Navarro

As an intern, my project for the summer was to find the intersection between Health Systems and Health Plans of the current members. Also, I worked on target lists member expansion.

The public health issue being addressed at my practicum site is how to engage health systems and health plans to address population health.

The host site holds meeting throughout the year to address hot topic issues, which member plans come collaborate and share their best practices.

I attended the Health System and Health Plan meetings and captured key notes to share with the members. Also, I linked the powerpoint presentations with the audio that is posted on the company website.

Public Health Significance

My practicum experience allowed me to network and learn how healthcare providers are addressing population health issues of the communities the providers serve.

Research new insights and innovate solutions to health problems concerning population health.

My project of finding the intersection between health systems and health plans is to provide insight how they each work collaboratively to address the target population health issues. My host site sets up meeting based on their member/health plans most requested topic need. Ex: Stars program and how to address fraud in Medicare and Medicaid.

Attended two out of town meetings with about 20 national health plans

• I was able to learn about additional areas of healthcare not taught in class.
• I meet with C-level health plans executives and was able to ask how they got started in healthcare

Make the best of what you got

• I found this practicum on my own. I did not give up until I found what was best for me.

The word soup of healthcare
http://youngadultshealthcare.tumblr.com

Bringing providers and patients to the heart.
www.healthcareacronyms.info
Food Insecurity among Food Bank Clients

Practicum Highlights

- The best part of this practicum was interacting with individuals at CCS. Volunteering at CCS is not a one-way road in which only clients benefit from the food and other services they receive. Clients were never shy about giving me life advice (“Keep smiling and the world will smile back!”), and I learned a great deal about their everyday struggles through the stories they shared.

- I enjoyed conducting telephone surveys because I got to see the nitty gritty of research; knowing how data is collected will be important if I decide to do similar projects later in my career!

Advice for Future Practicum Students

- When you’re helping clients, it is easy to get caught up in the list of questions you need to ask. Take your time and really listen. Many times, they will teach you something, if you simply lend a willing ear.

- The more flexible you are, the more you can gain from this experience. You can be involved in many different parts of the research process, from doing literature reviews to data collection and conducting surveys. This is a great practicum for anyone interested in health disparities research!

Integrating research in a community outreach setting

By: Hali Nguyen

This summer, I was incredibly lucky to work with Erica Cuarte and Sandi Pruitt in the Clinical Sciences Department at UT Southwestern. My job over the summer was to facilitate research initiatives relating to the Community Action Research (CARe) initiative, which is focused on carrying out research with low-income populations by partnering with Crossroads Community Services (CCS), which distributes food to the food-insecure populations. I learned the nature and structure of CCS by helping clients choose which foods they would like to receive. Throughout the summer, I was able to see how a non-profit works and the nuances of bringing together two vastly different entities, a research institution and a community outreach organization, for a common goal. My final project for the practicum is a poster relating the initial findings from the data being gathered at CCS. The main question of interest posed is whether BMI is associated with levels of food insecurity.

Public Health Significance

My practicum incorporated the following two public health services in incredibly innovative ways.

1. Monitor health status to identify and solve community health problems.
2. Mobilize community partnerships and action to identify and solve health problems.

These two services are combined in the research being done at CCS. Volunteers gather health-related data by taking the height and weight of the clients and by asking for self-reported health. This information is gathered each time a client comes in to receive food; thus, these two variables (BMI and self-reported health) can be tracked overtime in order to determine trends such as whether the food people receive is helping clients reach or maintain a healthy weight.
Diet and Physical Activity

Diet/physical activity intervention in the homeless

By: Faith Onsongo

The research study was diet and physical activity intervention among shelter-based residents at a transitional shelter. It was conducted over a span of 4 weeks, with the final follow up at 8 weeks. This was a randomized clinical trial and a pilot study.

The intervention group received fruits and vegetables twice a day, 5 days a week for 4 weeks, pedometers, 1 newsletter for every visit for the first 4 visits, accelerometer and information on BACK ON MY FEET program aimed at motivating to be physically active.

My duties were: recruiting, data collection, data entry, and data analysis, and writing an abstract.

Preliminary results indicated a weight loss of 2.54lbs and a 2.5 cm loss in waist circumference in the intervention group, while the control gained 0.16 lbs and 1 cm respectively.

Public Health Significance

One of the public health essential services is to inform, educate, and empower people about health issues.

The intervention group participants received accelerometers, pedometers, newsletters, fruits and vegetables, and were encouraged to participate in a physical activity program “BACK ON MY FEET” offered at the shelter.

During the visits, the intervention group participants were encouraged to aim at attaining 10,000 steps every day and encouraged to read their newsletters which had educational material on diet, encouraged to attend the fruits and vegetable snacks offered twice daily and lastly they were given information on how to enroll in “back on my feet program” offered at the shelter.

The ultimate goal is that participants make the changes in diet and physical activity as part of their lifestyle.

Lessons Learned

[OR] Advice for Future Students

• Make sure to sign up and look for practicum opportunities ahead of time.
Children’s Injury Prevention

**Children’s Health© Dallas Highlights**

- Interacted with a variety of people from various backgrounds including statistics, anthropology, community health, and epidemiology.
- Able to see the integrated nature of research and community outreach through the Injury Prevention Service.
- Spearheaded an evaluation on an Injury Prevention Program teaching parents about preventing unintentional injuries in children.

**Advice for Future Students**

- Some of the skills which I thought I was proficient at still needed a lot of improving. This is especially in regards to Excel, the use of pivot tables, and writing formal reports. I learned that there is always room for improvement.
- Always be ready to adapt. Aside from learning to work with a PC, I also had to change my project and learning objectives.
- There’s a lesson to learn in most experiences. You just have to be open-minded and present.

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**Data Analysis on the Children’s Train-the-Trainer Program**

By: Anitta Philip

I worked in the Injury Prevention Service which is made up of a team of individuals who identify threats to children in regards to injury, and then form solutions to prevent them from occurring. Currently the team has several initiatives underway. Some of them are geared towards car safety, others towards drowning, or ATV use. My project was to evaluate a program called Train-the-Trainer. This was a training program for safety advocates who would go into the community to teach parents and other caregiver groups about how to protect their children from injury. I found that although the program was meeting its objectives there were multiple inefficiencies and issues that were preventing its growth. Thus the goals of the designers could not be met. My end product was a written evaluation and presentation with a section discussing my recommendations for the program.

**Public Health Significance**

My project is a direct example of the 9th essential public health service. The report was an evaluation of a program that was catered towards the population in regards to prevention. The evaluation sought to determine efficacy and recommendations that could improve the program. Additionally, included in my recommendations, was the plan to increase support for community health by mobilizing leaders in pediatric care such as teachers and daycare providers.

The Injury Prevention Service covers many of the essential services of public health. They provide free car seats to those parents who cannot afford them, while also teaching them to appropriately harness their children. They provide community events to increase knowledge about the risks of drowning. The team is also combatting health literacy and will be attempting to communicate with patients through telehealth. Overall, the program is one that identifies problems and tries to mobilize parents to address those issues.

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MVCs are a leading cause of traumatic injuries in children. Consequently, a major focus of the IP Service is to combat the issue by educating parents daily.
Socioeconomic Burden of In-Office Phototherapy vs. Home Phototherapy

Socioeconomic Burden of In-Office Phototherapy vs. Home Phototherapy in Vitiligo Patients

By: Jean-Claire Powe

Vitiligo is a common depigmenting skin disorder caused by destruction of melanocytes, the cells that produce melanin in the epidermis. Narrowband ultraviolet B (NB-UVB) therapy is a safe and effective treatment option for vitiligo patients. Unfortunately, NB-UVB requires 2-3 clinic visits per week for 9-10 months to achieve significant repigmentation. The lack of compliance is the most important reason why phototherapy is often unsuccessful.

The use of home phototherapy as standard treatment has been a research topic for multiple skin diseases including vitiligo, psoriasis, and eczema.

The increase of interest in the use home phototherapy is due to studies that have shown that compliance to in-office treatment can be problematic due to the average three-day-per-week treatment plan.

This cross-sectional study was conducted to assess the socioeconomic burden, direct costs, and time dedicated to phototherapy. It is hoped that as a result of this study, physicians, insurance carriers and governmental agencies will consider home phototherapy more favorably for the treatment of vitiligo.

Public Health Significance

This practicum experience provided the following essential public health service,

“Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services”

This study assessed how to increase the accessibility and lower the burden of regular phototherapy treatments for vitiligo patients.

My Involvement

I collected cost and time data to compare the socioeconomic burden of in-office phototherapy to that of home phototherapy.

Hopefully, this data will show the benefits of home phototherapy for the treatment of vitiligo.

The current results show a significant difference in the cost and time lost due to in-office phototherapy compared to home phototherapy.
Childhood Obesity in Early Childhood

Child Care Workforce Mini Conference

By: SAMANTHA SCHAEFFER

I worked on the childhood obesity public health issue with a wonderful non-profit agency, The Child Care Group. The Child Care Group has access to all the licensed child care centers and day home in the north Texas region so in order to address the childhood obesity issue they decided to have a mini conference, they felt it was the best “bang for their buck” to get the information out there.

I was in charge of planning, executing and evaluating the mini conference. While planning I lined up the speakers, secured the site and linked child care staff to resources they can give to their families for nutrition and physical activity support.

The final product I created for the Child Care Group was the evaluation report of the mini conference. I created a graphic image to share with the Child Care Group to show how successful the mini conference was.

Highlights during my time at the Child Care Group

• Having adults participating in physical activities for children and having fun while doing it!
• Adults understanding the importance of healthy eating for young children.

Lessons Learned [OR] Advice for Future Practicum Students

Be ready to be a self-starter and quick learner. I had to adapt quickly to different situations without hesitation.

Public Health Significance

My practicum experience at the Child Care Group related to Essential Services of Public Health by informing, educating and empowering the early childhood education workforce about childhood obesity and how they can help to combat the issue. The mini conference provided a space to disseminate the information specifically to the child care workforce.

My practicum experience also related to enforcing laws and regulations to protect health and ensure safety. During the mini conference we informed the participants of the new regulations regarding Texas Rising Star quality rating system that are coming down the pike. The new regulations are regarding nutrition and physical activity for each different age group.

Assuring a competent workforce is another public health service done through my practicum. The mini conference gave ideas and applicable materials for the participants to take back to apply at their individual centers.

The Child Care group contributes to public health by ensuring that children are healthy physically and emotionally. The Child Care group’s mission is to promote, deliver and expand early childhood programs.
Health Education for Expecting Parents

Practicum Highlights

- Interviewing Community Health Workers about reasons for unnecessary ED use by parents of infants
- Attending local childbirth, breastfeeding and infant safety classes for research
- Utilizing knowledge and skills from the Maternal and Child Health Concentration in practice

Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Don’t hesitate to seek out needed information and guidance from those within and outside of your practicum site. No one expects that you will know everything coming into the practicum. You will be surprised at how willing others are to help!
- Have open communication with teammates. They may be working on something that could help you (and vice versa).
- Let others at your organization know what you are passionate about. Hopefully it will lead to opportunities down the road.

Linking Expecting Parents to Knowledge & Resources

By: Zainab Shipchandler

This summer, I was a Family and Community Engagement (FCE) Coordinator Intern at Children’s Health in Dallas. My main project was to develop a prenatal education curriculum that covers the essential health and safety topics a new parent in Dallas would want to know from pregnancy until their child’s first birthday.

Some of the relevant public health issues addressed with this curriculum include promoting prenatal care, decreasing unnecessary emergency department (ED) visits during infancy, and preventing sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

My final product is a curriculum with nine instructional sessions using a base curriculum and other reputable sources. It includes:

- a visual presentation, local resource list, and handouts for participants in English and Spanish for each session
- a collateral list for all materials needed, including baby shower items as an incentive for attendance
- pre- and post-evaluation surveys

For example, the session covering prenatal care includes information on health insurance options and low-cost clinics for pregnant women. The session on infant safety lists where parents can get their car seats checked and get CPR certified.

This class will help new parents get accurate and accessible health information, while guiding them through the complicated network of health and social services available in their community to ensure they can have safe and healthy pregnancies and babies.

The target population of the prenatal health education curriculum is all potential caregivers of new infants in Dallas, not only new mothers.

Image Source: http://rippleeffect.colostate.edu/p/tips-for-expecting-parents
Mobile Health Literacy

Practicum Highlights

- Meeting new and friendly people!
- Learning about patient care

Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Use this as a learning opportunity to improve several aspects of myself! I was able to practice and improve my comfort with speaking Spanish. In addition I used this as an opportunity to practice my teaching and communication skills.
- Take advantage of the time you have. The time flies by quickly so make the most of it!

Mobile Tablet versus Paper Delivery of Educational Materials for Low Income Hispanics

During my practicum I interviewed patients at the Robert B. Green Campus who were mainly Hispanic and low income to learn about their access to and use of electronic devices for personal use and for health information. In addition I provided educational information about their risk for diabetes and hypertension, health effects of hypertension and examples of healthy foods to eat.

Public Health Significance

Throughout my practicum, I helped educate patients about risks for and self-management of diabetes and hypertension. I also informed patients on services that the Healthy Heart Project (for patients who have poor self-management skills and understanding of their diabetes and hypertension) provided. In addition, I researched solutions to health problems by searching for diabetes educational materials on mobile applications that could be understood by and relevant to Hispanics in particular.

The main Essential Public Health Service that most pertained to my experience was informing, educating, and empowering people about their health issues.

I was working with the Health Heart Project that is designed to improve outcomes of persons with diabetes and hypertension. My duties were to interview patients about their access and usage of electronic devices and show them educational information about diabetes and hypertension.

My final products included adapting a patient survey, interviewing patients, analyzing data from these surveys, and writing a short paper about the project.

The main results I found was that elderly populations prefer reading health information via a paper format while the younger population prefers using a tablet.

The primary methods that Heart Health Program uses to contribute to public health is through education and addressing patients’ barriers to care. They offer group and one-on-one educational sessions to inform patients about diabetes and hypertension and teach them about: their medications, eating a healthy diet, reading nutrition labels, exercise tips, and more. In addition they monitor the patients’ progress by the phone or when they came in to their follow up visits.

Advice for Future Practicum Students

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Advice for Future Practicum Students

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Expanding Access to Care: By Understanding Family Medicine Visits

By: Clayton Bishop

At my practicum site, Spohn Memorial Hospital in Corpus Christi, I collected information about primary care visits. My practicum was part of the Residency Research Network of Texas. The purpose of this study was to help look at the complexity of primary care visits, in order to better characterize the interactions between doctors and their patients. I also entered this data into a database.

The data collected from this study will help health systems and providers better understand what occurs in an average primary care visit in order to better optimize those visits. In addition, because there were multiple sites in Texas, various discrepancies in care can be identified.

In addition, I will be using the same dataset to look at doctor preference in hypertension medication. While there are guidelines for medication prescribing, there is still some provider preference and I hope to characterize why certain medications are chosen. The final product I am in the process of making is a poster that will be presented at a family medicine conference this fall. In addition, the results from the complexity portion of the study will be published in a journal this coming year.

Public Health Significance

One of the ten public health essentials, as defined by the CDC, is to “Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services.” My practicum, by aiming to characterize patient-provider interactions, and hoping to optimize that interaction hopes to improve the quality and accessibility of personal health services.

My project also aims to improve individual quality of care by aiming to understand why certain medications are prescribed for hypertension in certain situations, and to identify any geographic discrepancies in care throughout the state from different sites.

My site contributes to public health by expanding access to individual health services. As the local county hospital, and the seat of the county health district, Spohn Memorial gives individual health services to the indigent, as well as being the center for treating many infectious diseases.

Lessons Learned [OR] Advice for Future Practicum Students

I learned how important it is to treat all research subjects with respect while you ask them to participate. While they may be different from me, they are deserving of the respect. Additionally, I learned how much primary care medicine and public health intersect, because of the importance of preventative care.

Special events/ duties/ highlights during your practicum

- The opportunity to work in the field with physicians was a huge highlight for me, as a future clinician.
- Additionally, getting to collect data directly from research subjects was a new and rewarding experience.
Condom Utilization in Adolescents and Young Adults

By: Chelsea Graves

At my practicum site I participated in condom distribution and VOICES/VOCES sessions, while concurrently building the framework for my project. Due to my interest in pediatrics, I wanted to focus my final product on the sexually active adolescent (15-19 years) and young adult (20-24 years) high-risk male populations, especially due to the fact that the highest incidence of new HIV infections occurs in those under the age of 24; the rate of infection in the under 24 age group has steadily risen over the last decade, thus making this issue still relevant in the realm of public health. One of my goals was not only examine factors that affect condom utilization in these age groups but also to examine if and how cognitive development affects condom negotiation and thus utilization in these groups, which could explain differences in utilization and infection rates between the two age groups.

The purpose of the PLAY Campaign is to promote and increase condom use in populations that are disproportionately affected by HIV in San Antonio, with the goal of reducing the spread of HIV in the men who have sex with men, African American, and injecting drug user population of San Antonio by expanding free condom access and improving condom knowledge in a collaborative effort among local businesses, medical providers, AIDS Service organizations and community members. The PLAY Campaign also provides an evidence-based curriculum- VOICES/VOCES (Video Opportunities for Innovative Condom Education and Safer Sex) to both men and women with an emphasis on those at highest risk of contracting HIV or STDs. VOICES/VOCES is a single, evidence-based HIV behavioral intervention which focuses on proper condom use and improves condom negotiation skills to prevent the spread of HIV and STDs. Throughout my practicum experience I participated in facilitating these sessions along and also in condom distribution. In terms of essential public health services my host organization: Monitors health status to identify and solve community health problems; Diagnoses and investigates health problems and health hazards in the community; Informs, educates, and empowers people about health issues; Mobilizes community partnerships and action to identify and solve health problems.

Lessons Learned [OR] Advice for Future Practicum Students

Don’t be afraid to take the reigns into your hands and frame your project! What you get out of your experience is determined entirely by effort you put in. Most preceptors are extremely interested in helping you learn and stand on your own feet.
Reportable Disease Investigations

Disease Investigations: An Unknown Safety Net
By: Christopher Menges

Every day at the San Antonio Metro Health Department, reports of diseases flood in. These diseases are considered reportable for a variety of diseases, be it for their severity (such as Rabies) or their potential to spread (such as Pertussis, known as Whooping Cough).

It is here that I had an opportunity to spend a practicum refining the disease investigation skills that I learned throughout my studies at the UTSPH. My day-to-day duties involved calling and speaking with those infected with a reportable disease. This can range from foodborne illnesses like Salmonella to vector-borne diseases like Murine Typhus. While speaking with the person, we talk about their routine prior to becoming ill to help identify where the infection may have occurred, and how to stop the spread, if applicable.

Special events/duties/highlights during your practicum
• Cyclospora Outbreak Investigations
• Nationwide Anthrax Laboratory Calls

Public Health Significance

At the San Antonio Metro Health Department, we accomplished many of 10 Essential Public Health Services as described by the CDC. To start off, we help to inform, educate, and empower people concerning their health issues.

We also helped to diagnose and investigate community health problems. These problems may stem from a restaurant, a specific food item, or a community resource such as water.

This goes hand in hand with our job to monitor the health status of a community. While interviewing those afflicted, we can talk to them concerning their current health status, and how to best avoid infecting those that are within close contact.

Besides investigation and education, our department also helps those with health care that is otherwise unavailable. For households that have had a pertussis infection but do not have health insurance, we help provide prophylactic antibiotics to the entire household to stop the spread of the disease.

Advice for Future Practicum Students

Do not be afraid to speak up and ask questions. Many of the skills that you have gained throughout your education at UTSPH are practical and may help improve the way your practicum accomplishes things.

Dahlgren-Whitehead Model for determining individual factors
Courtesy of HealthKnowledge
Public Health in Air Force Aviators

A KC-135 refuels an F-16 Fighting Falcon during a training mission over Tulsa, Okla., May 4, 2015. The F-16 is assigned to the 138th Fighter Wing, Tulsa Air National Guard. The KC-135 is assigned to Tinker Air Force Base.

U.S. National Guard photo by Air Force Master Sgt. Mark A. Moore

FLYERS ARE A SPECIAL BREED OF AIRMEN

By: MICHELLE R. MILNER

Every Air Force base has a flight medicine clinic. These clinics provide primary care to a specialized group of Airmen based on the occupational stressors and risks associated with their jobs. These Airmen are the pilots, aircrew, Nuclear Officers, firefighters and special operators stationed at each location.

These special groups are unique; all military members face unique stressors not typically seen in the civilian world, but these groups face that in spades.

Examples of these stressors include pilots and aircrew who are responsible for flying into war zones, accomplishing a mission while being fired upon. Special operators are elite athletes who fly and may need to work in austere conditions for 30 or more hours without sleep.

Flight Medicine teams are specially trained to address the occupational hazards associated with this unique group of patriots!

Public Health Significance

This community of flyers faces health problems and hazards not typically seen by civilian physicians. As flight physicians, we are able to monitor their health in association with the annual Personal Health Assessment and requisite Pre- and Post-Deployment Assessments in a way which prevents minor or subtle issues from becoming debilitating and career ending.

Additionally, the Flight Medicine clinic is responsible for educating not only our patient population but also the entire Air Force base regarding preventive measures which can ensure long, safe and healthy lives.

The Flight Medicine clinics work with Behavioral, Bioenvironmental and Food sciences to ensure all military members and civilian employees work and live in a safe and productive atmosphere.

Flight Medicine develops plans and presents policies to base leadership designed to maximize wellbeing as well as educating the base populace.

Post-deployment assessments

• Flyers require assessment for exposures to infectious agents as well as to trauma
• Young Airmen need a place to call before and after deploying

CARING FOR COMBAT CONTROL TRAINEES

• There is no group of Airmen more dedicated to the United States and the Air Force than our future Combat Controllers!
• These guys are young and hard to break – keep a keen eye on them because when they do go down, it is usually HARD!

A deployed special operator rejoins his teammates in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Jeremy T. Lock, USAF
Public Health Significance

The learning objective of this practicum is to understand human rights and international humanitarian law practices.

As a global health concentration student, the practicum complemented my knowledge in global health issues; I learned about discrimination against albinos in Tanzania, female genital mutilation practices in Egypt, prisoners’ abuse in Syria, child and forced marriage in Yemen, and refugee access to health in Jordan.

This awareness will not only help me academically with my research papers, projects and thesis, but also on a personal and professional level. I now understand the importance of research in raising public awareness and change people’s perceptions about these violations.

However I now also recognize the importance of advocacy and public policy in order to find solutions and ultimately change these discriminatory and unjust behaviors.

Human Rights Watch, Middle East and North Africa Division

By: Lina Nabulsi

This summer I completed my practicum at Human Rights Watch in Washington DC. HRW is an international organization that defends the rights of people worldwide by conducting investigations and research to expose human rights violations and abuses to the public.

HRW constitutes of multiple divisions. I worked with the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) program.

During the practicum I worked on several research projects; refugees, war victims and prisoners of war. I helped the team with collecting information from different sources; media and NGOs, translating and transcribing interviews of victims and applying my writing skills to draft press releases and articles.

Special events during the practicum

- Effective Communication with Dexter Filkins, a previous New York Times and currently The New Yorker journalist.
- Challenges of Research in Yemen with Balkis Willle, Yemen and Kuwait researcher

To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity.

Nelson Mandela
Public Health Significance

The essential service of public health this practicum most followed is to “evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services.” This practicum gathered data on aspects including perceived accessibility to social services and quality of personalized clinic services. The goal of this study is to evaluate which social factors addressed during a clinical encounter significantly impact the care of patients, and to identify populations most affected. The outcome of this study is to better inform physicians of the significance of social factors when caring for patients, and to perhaps identify strengths and deficits in the primary care due to the level of complexity encountered.

Evaluation of Factors Contributing to Complexity in a Family Medicine Clinic Setting in McAllen, TX

A large scale survey was conducted in several clinical sites in Texas to identify social factors which influence the complexity of patient cases in different family medicine clinics. The clinical site in McAllen, TX, was unique in that it served primarily Hispanic and low-income patients. Surveys were taken during each patient visit with patient consent to evaluate the factors discussed by family practice residents and physicians which influenced management of care, and factors of interest included the patients’ complete medical histories, current socioeconomic status, and barriers to care that were faced by patients. Specific factors focused on with my study include a time-motion analysis to evaluate whether the time spent by physicians on different aspects of the patient encounter influence the quality of care of the patient.

Daily clinical conferences

This site also provided an opportunity to learn about current medical practice and health topics specific to south Texas during daily lunch conferences with residents and physicians.

Advice for Future Students

To fully take advantage of the time during your practicum experience, make sure to form respectful, professional, and friendly relationships with the staff at the site, as you will learn the most by being able to communicate effectively.
Barriers to Care Coordination

Practicum Highlights

• The top barrier identified by patients was lack of health insurance.

• Residential distance and transportation were also key factors that may influence whether or not a patient follows up with a PCP appointment.

Advice for Future Practicum Students

• When interviewing patients, make sure that they understand what you are asking them. You may need to rephrase the question if the patient is confused.

What is keeping patients away from their doctor?

By: Ricardo Pedraza

The excessive number of patients being admitted to the ER has created a major burden for hospitals worldwide. Some of these patients do not follow up with their own PCP, opting to use the ER instead. Numerous barriers exist that keep patient from attending their PCP appointments. In order to reduce the amount of patients frequenting the ER, it is imperative that these barriers are addressed. My goal was to identify the obstacles patients encounter that may be keeping them from continuing with their follow-up care. I interviewed several patients at the U.H.S. Internal Medicine clinic at the Robert B. Green campus in downtown San Antonio. Some of the barriers commonly mentioned were: residential distance, lack of transportation, and lack of health insurance. With this information, hospitals may be able to develop a policy that both increase appointment compliance and reduce ER burden.

Public Health Significance

The essential public health service that this experience best addresses is to diagnose and investigate health problems in the community. The barriers keeping patients away from the PCP is a critical public health problem because it increases the likelihood that they will choose the ER as their main source of care. Hospital ER's are usually overcrowded and solely cannot provide the optimum continuity of care patients need.

This experience has also served to better educate and empower patients about the benefits of keeping up with their PCP appointments. Patients must be informed about the significance of care continuity. With this knowledge, we hope that the weight of patients the ER usually encounters can gradually decline.
Public Health Significance

The United States Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing (AgFF) department experienced 21.2 deaths per 100,000 workers in 2012. In particular, milk production operations (e.g., dairy facilities), have experienced increased rates of work-related injuries and fatalities. The reason for this increase in rates is the quick movement (approximately 20 years) from small dairy farms to large-herd dairy facilities. This movement to mass-production has changed traditional milking, feeding, and farm operational procedures. Moreover, additional occupational tasks have been introduced into daily routines on a dairy farm; therefore, this training’s goal aimed to promote awareness of occupational hazards and educate dairy workers on safety techniques to prevent work-related injuries and fatalities. Consequently, the Public Health Essential Service relevant to this project is to “inform, educate, and empower people about health issues” on dairy facilities.

Dairy Worker Safety Training

By: Anabel Rodriguez

My practicum opportunity allowed me to deliver safety trainings to over 350 dairy workers in 12 different dairy facilities across Texas and New Mexico. OSHA’s Susan Harwood Dairy Safety Training aims to provide safety trainings using mobile-learning technologies (or iPads) in order to promote the sustainability and safety of dairy workers. This particular training was offered in both English and Spanish. It was commenced with a (1) baseline Level II post-test, (2) video vignettes with interactive section divisions, (3) Level II post-test, and, (4) concluded, with a Level I training evaluation. This safety training provided 1 hour and 30 minutes of safety practices around the dairy farm, injury prevention techniques, and worker responsibilities. Overall, a 20% increase margin was observed from the pre-test to the post-test following the safety training.

Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA): Susan Harwood Dairy Worker Safety Training

Practicum Experience Highlights

• Designed evaluations and training in English and Spanish
• Great feedback from workers:

“This training was a great experience. I loved the videos! They caught my attention because they are in my native language. I can follow and understand what is happening.”

Lesson Learned

• Adult learning is different from classroom-based learning
• M-learning technologies are novel and relevant
• Interaction with workers is key

Lessons Learned
[OR] Advice for Future Students

• Please share a “pearl of wisdom” with future practicum students – something you wish someone had told you.

Dairy worker experiencing video vignette interactions on animal handling.
Public Health in Family Medicine: An Examination of Pain Management in a Clinical Setting

This practicum was organized by the Residency Research Network of Texas. It was divided into 2 parts: data collection & data analysis. The data collection portion was 4 weeks and involved shadowing family medicine physicians and filling out a detailed survey about the content of the visit. The data analysis portion took place in July/August, and involved working individually with Dr. Burge on an individual research question.

I chose to address the issue of pain management. How many patients are coming in with pain complaints? How often are these complaints addressed by the physician? Are there factors that predict whether or not a physician will address the pain complaints?

Preliminary results suggest that while there aren’t certain demographics correlated with more pain complaints, there are factors that predict whether or not the physician will address it.

Public Health Significance

The significance of this project will impact both physician and patient populations. For physicians, this study might make them more cognizant of factors that might impact whether or not they address all of their patients’ complaints. Ultimately, this knowledge could lead to changed practices and better care for patients. For patients, this study could give some insight on factors that could contribute to whether or not they will develop musculoskeletal pain.

The PHES that most applies to this project is #9: Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services.

Each year, RRNet conducts a study in family medicine practices across Texas in order to address the quality of care being provided to patients. These studies can address anything from vaccinations to diabetes to hypertension, all of which are increasingly important issues in our community today.

Lessons Learned

- Preventative medicine and public health is an essential part of family medicine practice.
- I had a difficult time narrowing down a specific research question from the large data set – there were so many public health issues to choose from!
Promoting a Healthy Lifestyle

Eastside Promise Neighborhood: Community Connectors, After-school Programs, and Healthy Taste Event

By: ELISA TURNER

I really feel like I lucked out with my practicum! Throughout the experience, I was given the opportunity to help plan a community event called “Healthy Taste”, complete observations of various academic and physical activity after school programs funded by EPN, and be a part of the planning committee for a large needs assessment and referral program in the neighborhood that will be starting in the coming months.

The resulting “products” from my time with EPN were: a large Saturday sampling event where various vendors could showcase healthy food for the public to taste, and the creation of a referral document and process forms related to the Community Connectors program. These forms will be used in the coming months to help train individuals who will be going door to door to meet residents, and in turn connect individuals with the specific services they are in need of.

Public Health Significance

EPN projects target many of the essential Public Health services. The two that the program most closely relates to are:

- Link people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable
- Mobilize community partnerships and action to identify and solve health problems

Community Connectors’ purpose is to link people with needed services. For example, if a person needs a PCP, a local clinic will be contacted immediately ensuring that the individual is successfully enrolled as a new patient.

EPN’s success is due largely to partnerships with other local nonprofits. EPN’s mission is to empower existing health-promoting programs, such as the YMCA, in impacting as many lives as possible.
South Texas Environmental Education and Research (STEER) immerses health professions students and faculty in the unique culture and environment of the Texas-Mexico Border. Our purpose is to reunite Medicine and Public Health.

Each summer, MD/MPH students from San Antonio head to Laredo and Harlingen to experience first-hand the intersection of public health and medicine through a real world study in environmental health. Read the summaries below to learn about the STEER program through the experiences of UTSPH students.

http://steer.uthscsa.edu/index.aspx
During the program, I studied alternative forms of medical treatment across cultures with another student and we presented our research on the topic of “Comparing East Indian Healing Traditions with Mexican Folk Remedies.” I found that there are many similarities between the two healing systems, including many medicinal plants common to both: eucalyptus, ginger, chamomile, aloe vera, mint, rue, garlic and basil.

Through the South Texas Environmental Education and Research (STEER) Program, I gained hands-on experience involving various public health issues at the Texas-Mexico border, teaching me how to be an informed public health advocate in terms of preventative health efforts, border health concerns, environmental health hazards, and community-based healthcare initiatives. For instance, getting the chance to follow a promatora around a local colonia helped me understand the healthcare discrepancies prevalent within the community. Lack of knowledge of available resources and limited transportation were among some of the routine hurdles of receiving medical guidance and care on the border.

Public Health Significance

In the STEER program, I discovered how the Essential Public Health Services of 1) diagnosing and investigating health problems and health hazards in the community and 2) informing, educating, and empowering people about health issues can go hand in hand. Not only do those associated with the STEER program foster a component of research in identifying and solving health problems in the community, but they also spread awareness regarding health issues. An example of this that is a part of the STEER experience: visiting the superfund site at the Donna Reservoir, the Harlingen Recycling Center, and Brownsville landfill, reinforced the importance of a united community effort to properly manage waste. Community members are encouraged to take accountability by making changes in their own lifestyles (i.e. recycling routinely).

Advice for Future STEER Students

Make the most of the opportunity to interact with the community!

Keep a journal to chronicle all of your experiences as they are plentiful!
A Diverse Overview of Public Health in the Rio Grande Valley

By: Puja Gandhi

During my time in the ‘South Texas Environmental and Educational Research’ (STEER) Program this summer, I was able to experience first-hand many traditions such as a Yerberia (Herb market) and visit a curandera (traditional Mexican folk healer). Additionally, from all our unique site visits and lectures, I learned that public health is an intricate entity that is encompassed by social, cultural, environmental, political, and educational components. Our practicum focused on allowing us to gain a comprehensive awareness of every aspect of life on the U.S.-Mexico border by taking us on field trips and site visits that provided us with insight on border health, immigration problems, and Mexican culture.

Public Health Significance

The primary goal of STEER was to create awareness for the major issues facing South Texas, and this included interacting with the public health organizations such as the local Health department, the E.P.A., and the Dean of the Brownsville School of Public Health. These organizations identify and monitor the local public health concerns in an area and then research, implement policies, and gain community support for interventions that will benefit the community as a whole. Thus, I was able to witness all the Essential Public Health Services being implemented in a community stricken with many major border health issues.

STEER primarily provided us with insight on how mobilizing community partnerships can help solve the important public health problems facing a community; for example, many of the areas in South Texas have extremely high rates of obesity and diabetes, and thus many community interventions and policies are being put into place with the help of educational institutions, the government, and even just the motivated residents of the community to change the culture of health and wellness in order to reduce obesity rates in areas such as McAllen and Brownsville, TX.

Lessons Learned

Public health is a field built on compassion, motivation, determination, and teamwork; thus, it is important to go into any practicum with a nonjudgmental attitude and with ability to work with the local community. The STEER program taught me that in order to be a good public health professional, it is important to be competent in the values, beliefs, and ideas of the community you are providing for. In my case, that included becoming a more culturally competent individual in the Mexican culture and in current border health issues.
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/