Public Health Practice

Stories from the Field
The University of Texas School of Public Health
Student Practicum Experiences
Summer 2015 – Management, Policy & Community Health
The practicum experience is an integral part of the MPH and DrPH curricula. Public health students are provided with the opportunity to apply their classroom knowledge to real world settings through which they make a meaningful contribution to a public health organization.

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

This 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

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### Management, Policy & Community Health

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Dental and Oral Health Problems

Dental health

By: Yousif Ali

My practicum experience has been an interesting one at 32 dental clinic. This is because I have been able to transform my knowledge from a theoretical to practical experience. I have diagnosed patients and offered appropriate treatment. I have also educated them on importance of oral health and on how they should maintain it.

During my stay at 32 dental clinic I looked at the practitioners’ patient relationship in terms of communication and diversity. 32 dentist clinics ensure their public health professionals communicate effectively and recognize diversity in their work.

During my practicum I worked as a dentist and my main duties were diagnosing and administering treatment to patients.

I collaborated with colleagues and the community to investigate and manage dental health problems in the community thus building on my leadership skills of basic public health sciences.

Special events/duties/highlights during my practicum

Participating in creating oral awareness was so overwhelming. Interacting with people from diverse background and patients felt so special to me. Service provision is my dream, and doing so at 32 dental clinics, life was so amazing.

Public Health Significant

Oral health talks a lot about someone general health. studies show there is a correlation between gum diseases and health complications such as stroke and heart diseases. It is important for frequent checkups, hence a healthy smile.

Essential Public Health Services

My practicum experience relates to The essential public health services because I was able to educate, diagnose, empower people about health issues and investigate health problems in the community.

Source: http://www.deltadentalines.com/oral.health/dentalhealth.htm

Santa Ana, Honduras Brigade

In Santa Ana, Honduras we spent one week doing a combination of things. We saw patients and also got the opportunity to teach students how to wash their hands and brush their teeth.

The main issues we were addressing here were lack of access and a lack of knowledge.

The Host organization Houston Shoulder to shoulder provided the clinic, soap, and toothbrushes. This is how they addressed the issues.

I personally helped to admit and diagnose patients. I also played a role in handing out vitamins, toothbrushes and soap to students.

In addition to the work done abroad a video was made summarizing the whole experience.

LBJ Hospital Chronic Conditions

In July of this summer I worked in a preceptorship under the hospitalist.

I was quick to discover that the main issues within this hospital and community were chronic conditions such as diabetes, obesity, hypertension, COPD, and high cholesterol.

Some of these conditions are exacerbated by issues of noncompliance. My goal was to explore common trends in non-compliance.

The reasons for noncompliance were so simple it is almost unbelievable that issues such as no time to go to the pharmacy and the oxygen being to cold were the reasons for not complying.

Events during Honduras Trip

- Teaching Children in Honduras how to Brush teeth and Wash hands
- Giving Patients Physical Exams and taking histories

Events at Lyndon B. Johnson Hospital

- Giving Patients physical Exams and taking histories
- Taking note of illnesses in the community
- Figuring out common

Lessons Learned

- Always have the final objective in mind when you are taking steps to complete the many sub goals.
- It is easy to get distracted and forget why you are where you’re at.
Overview
The Renal Unit of the Houston Methodist Hospital (HMH) was the site of my practicum where for 10 weeks I worked on a project to help fix patient departure delay observed after discharge.

Applying the Lean Six Sigma methodology, I investigated the discharge process, identified barriers, analyzed data, and proposed improvements that would serve the interest of patients and the hospital. The root cause analysis revealed a modest level of uncertainty in the projected patient discharge date which results in a cascade of procedural delays and eventual departure delay. This delay impacts on patient flow from the ER, and invariably on the business potential of the Hospital.

Active involvement of physicians in the patient discharge date projection was recommended in order to reduce variations. A simple daily check tool was designed to obtain physicians opinion. This opinion will be taken into account during the care coordination rounds (CCR) where discharge projections are made. Improvements in patients’ transportation arrangements

Public Health Significance
This practicum experience primarily relates to the Public Health Essential Service (PHES) that evaluates effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services. Key performance indicators of discharge response time reflect on the quality and effectiveness of the services provided by HMH.

The Healthcare management and leadership skills gained during this internship are invaluable to my professional pursuits.

Achieving optimal discharged patient response time
By: Komi Akpalu

Houston Methodist Hospital contributes significantly to public health through the PHES. As a leading healthcare institution, it diagnoses and investigates health problems and health hazards in the community. It also informs, educates, and empowers people about health issues. Continuous service process improvement is strategic for HMH as it seeks to maintain excellence and demonstrate indisputable leadership in the healthcare industry.

Pearls of wisdom

− Networking is key to professional success so start early.

− “The goal is not to be better than anyone else but rather be better than you were yesterday.”
  (Jon Gordon, The Energy Bus)
Transforming Health Service Delivery

Interventions to Reduce Childhood Obesity

By: Uche Arizor

Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services (HCPHES) is a qualifying provider for the Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment (DSRIP) program, a part of the Texas 1115 waiver. HCPHES proposed 5 projects under DSRIP. My job was to assist in the development, implementation, and assessment of two of the DSRIP projects: obesity reduction and tobacco cessation.

I worked as a facilitator for obesity reduction. This project uses the We Can!® Parents Program and the CATCH Kids Club curriculum to educate parents and children on nutrition, energy balance, and physical activity.

I received the CATCH Kids Club training and facilitated four four-week sessions with children aged 6 through 17, divided by age group.

In between health education for obesity, I worked on a few projects related to communications, data analysis, program design, and program impact evaluation.

Public Health Significance

The DSRIP projects at HCPHES were designed to transform health delivery (Youth Dental, Video DOT for tuberculosis, Expanded Mobile Health) and to introduce targeted behavior interventions (obesity reduction and tobacco cessation for low-income, Medicaid-eligible Harris County residents). HCPHES monitored health status to identify which public health issues to address in their 1115 Waiver proposals. The proposals involved developed plans to support HCPHES and community health efforts.

My practicum experience directly involved informing, educating, and empowering people about maintaining a healthy weight through We Can! sessions. Sessions were arranged through mobilized partnerships with community organizations and centers. The data analysis project I worked on also intended to inform internal staff on intervention progress for tobacco cessation. Through smaller projects I contributed to the evaluation of the obesity reduction DSRIP project.

Special Events and Highlights

• Attended the Region 3 Learning Collaborative
• Data analysis and graphing for Tobacco Cessation
• Created a production outline for a DSRIP project overview video

Advice for Future Students

• Be open and flexible to experiences outside of initial expectations
• Speak up about the specific skills you’d like to develop

We Can!® logo courtesy of US Department of Health and Human Services National Institutes of Health

http://nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/we-can
Improving the Quality of Texas Health Care

By: Mimi Asafo-Adjei

I worked as a Program Specialist I at the Texas Institute of Health Care Quality and Efficiency (Institute), a program administratively attached to the Texas Health and Human Services Commission in Austin. The Institute was formed in 2011 by the Texas Legislature to provide policy recommendations to the Legislature on improving health care quality and efficiency in Texas.

The main project during my practicum was to evaluate the works of the Institute. The 84th regular session of the Legislature called for the removal of the Institute effective September 1, 2015. My project involved reviewing Institute’s reports, activities and comparing them to legislative mandate and strategic plan. Additionally, I helped design an online survey to obtain stakeholder input evaluating the Institute’s activities and seeking on next steps.


Findings: Ultimately, the Institute accomplished its legislative mandate. Also, stakeholders are in support of continuing with the works and efforts of the Institute regardless of its removal from statute.

Public Health Significance

The Institute influences the development of policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts. It also conducts research for new insights and innovative solutions to improve health care quality and efficiency.

Texas has one of the highest uninsured population rates in the country. (America’s Health Rankings, 2014). In light of this, the Institute sent a recommendation to the Legislature in 2014 to expand access to care through granting the HHSC Executive Commissioner authority to negotiate expansion with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

The Institute also recommended the promotion of health literacy to inform and empower Texans with knowledge of health care issues.
Youth Violence Prevention

Striving to Reduce Youth Violence Everywhere

By: Melissa Bing

I interned with the STRYVE initiative at the Houston Department of Health and Human Services. STRYVE is a CDC youth violence prevention program; currently in its pilot phase in Houston and four other cities. Houston STRYVE is currently targeting Houston Police District 14 and the surrounding area of Sunnyside, and have implemented two programs: Youth Enhancement Solutions (Y.E.S.) and Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED).

Public Health Significance

Like many complex public health problems, the issue of violence prevention is one that requires the intersection of numerous essential public health services. Perhaps most key in the efforts of STRYVE are the following:

- **Diagnose and investigate:** STRYVE targeted the HPD 14 area because of its high juvenile crime rate, they were then able to determine determinants of the crimes and violence, such as poor school attendance, and help begin to address the issue.

- **Inform, educate, and empower:** STRYVE empowers youth so they can be advocates for youth violence prevention in their communities.

- **Mobilize:** STRYVE Houston has developed relationships with stakeholders, such as HPD and the YMCA, and has helped mobilize them, as well as the local community, to ensure that evidence based programming is being utilized.

My key responsibilities were to complete a local health department assessment among health department staff and youth violence prevention coalition members, provide an updated STRYVE Implementation Evaluation Plan, and complete eleven youth risk and resilience profiles, on topics such as youth homelessness and youth violence prevention. All of the above mentioned will serve as my final project.

Special Duties

- I was asked to serve as a liaison for the Houston Department of Health and Human Services as they underwent a youth violence prevention evaluation by the American Institutes of Research.
- I’ve coordinated a quantitative survey and am in the process of coordinating a quantitative group interview.

Advice for Future Students

- Don’t be afraid to take initiative!
- Speak up during meetings; let your ideas be heard.
- If you don’t feel as though you’re being challenged during your practicum, don’t be afraid to ask for additional work, so that you can make it a valuable experience.

CPTED Mural, Sunnyside, Houston. Photo courtesy of Pablo Sanchez, Sterling High School

STRYVE logo. Image courtesy of the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention.
Reducing Secondhand Smoke Exposure

While interning with the Baby’s Breath II Study I became involved in a host of different responsibilities. I observed the screening and recruitment process for mothers with a household member who smoked. Following recruitment I was able to become involved in the collection of questionnaires designed to understand how family members regulated smoking behaviors in their homes and cars.

Public Health Significance

The Baby’s Breath II Study is a randomized controlled trial targeting secondhand smoke exposure among premature infants discharged from the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). The study aims to determine if a hospital initiated motivational enhanced program can result in a reduction of SHSe among premature infants compared to a conventional care method (Stotts, et al., 2013).

Secondhand smoke exposure can be harmful to infants and this exposure is associated with an increased risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), and a host of respiratory conditions.

In the course of the study I also observed the process of conventional care visits and motivational interview visits which were conducted in both the hospital and the homes of participants. From there I was also able to participate in data collection for secondhand smoke exposure and data entry to learn more about the outcome of the research study.
Public Health Significance

ACHE is a renowned association that provides the education and tools to assure a competent public and personal healthcare workforce. Through my time with ACHE, I have been given multiple projects to increase the impact we have for our members. One project in particular was through the Regional Services department to innovate current educational templates. These templates are provided to our chapters throughout the nation to allow our members to receive educational opportunities close to home. Many of these guides contained resources from pre-ACA and could be irrelevant to our members. After updating the files for ACHE, our chapters will be able to provide continued education to our members with relevant and current resources.

Innovation in Healthcare Management

Since its inception in 1933, the American College of Healthcare Executives, has continuously served as the preeminent professional society for healthcare leaders. Now, as healthcare is rapidly changing, there must be constant innovation ensuring we remain relevant to our members.

In doing so, I collaborated with all of the ACHE departments and completed tasks that were aimed to innovate a current process or review for opportunities for improvement. My most significant input was incorporating my diverse background in ensuring that diversity is a quality that is present in all processes.

My community preceptor, Elizabeth Summy, CAE, Executive VP/COO of ACHE, provided me a project to review the current process of creating annual objectives. In the end, I was able to gain valuable knowledge of how to create annual goals to both run the business and change the business. As a result, I was able to provide Ms. Summy a starting template for a workshop that is to be given to the Senior Management Team of ACHE.

Including Diversity through Process Improvement Plans

By: Jake Casanova

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Practicum Highlights

- Worked directly with Healthcare’s most advanced leaders
- Gained knowledge of the association side of healthcare
- Visited other associations including: Joint Commission, HIMSS, AHA, and others

Advice for Future Students

- Never be afraid to ask for more exposure, whether through added projects or networking opportunities
- The exposure through ACHE, as well as any practicum, can help jump start your career after graduation...take advantage of the networking and create lasting relationships
- Join ACHE as a student member as they provide resources and guidance in your career

Public Health Significance

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Overall, ACHE strives to be the best professional society for healthcare leaders. They are continuously innovating their strategic plan in order to maintain their reputation and relevance for their members.
Practicum Highlights

- Participated in volunteer training sessions
- Presented at the CACTX Volunteer Networking Forum
- Attended Multi-Disciplinary Team Meetings

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Assessing Volunteer Program Efficacy to Improve Service Capacity at The Children’s Assessment Center

Established in 1991 as a public-private partnership, The Children’s Assessment Center (CAC) serves to assist child victims of sexual assault across the Greater Houston area. The organization provides a multi-faceted approach to disclosure and care using the advocacy center model. To better serve their clients, The CAC utilizes volunteers to support programming and outreach initiatives.

I worked with CAC staff to assess the volunteer program and provide recommendations for program development in the context of expansion. My assessment incorporated mixed methods, including document review, program observation, survey creation, distribution, and analysis, and literature review, to provide an overview of program operations and efficacy. My findings were compiled into a program report and presented to the organization’s administrative team for consideration. Additionally, I submitted revised outreach, training, and programming materials to model creative programming strategies.

Public Health Significance

This project served to explore program evaluation, a critical component of the American Public Health Association’s 10 Essential Services. In the context of the Essential Services, evaluation measures the efficacy, accessibility, and quality of health services provided.

In public health practice, practitioners utilize program evaluation to examine operations, identify areas of strength and weaknesses, assess outcomes, and track program progress. Evaluation can also be utilized to demonstrate accountability when working with community members, funders, and policy makers.

Volunteer program evaluation at The CAC contributes to public health because it works to improve programming and ensure effective care for the organization’s clients. The results of the assessment promote the development of comprehensive program goals and objectives, and stress the need for accurate data collection to reflect the impact of volunteer services.

Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Strive for open and frequent communication with your preceptor to make the most of your experience
- Network to build your relationship with members of the organization
- Look for ways to contribute to the organization beyond the established guidelines of your practicum
Program Re-engineering

Program Re-engineering: Addressing Wait Time At HCPHES Clinics.

By: Onyinye P. Chukwuneke

This summer, I worked within the Disease Control and Clinical Prevention division at Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services. My internship involved working within the organizational development unit in addressing the issue of patient wait time. My role involved determining how their clinics can be restructured to cut down patient wait time. On a broader scale, cutting down patient wait time is a quality issue since this is tied to patient satisfaction and is an important factor when evaluating a service provider. To address this issue, data had to be collected, analyzed and interpreted. Tools used during my internship were 5whys, 5S, RACI diagrams, process maps. My duties involved collecting data by interviewing, shadowing workers and clients, analyzing the information collected and providing process improvement recommendations for two of their clinics – that was my final product.

Public Health Significance

HCPHES’s role encompasses the ten essential public health services. As should be expected, one of the core missions of HCPHES is to promote a healthy and safe community.

Subsequently, my internship focus was concentrated on three main areas within the ten essential public health services and they were: assuring a competent public health workforce, evaluating effectiveness, accessibility and quality of personal and population based health services and providing solutions. These solutions could have a long term impact on community health.

Lessons Learned

[OR] Advice for Future Students

- Do the work, follow through, be open and keep learning.
Public Health Significance

My practicum experience fit under number nine, in the CDC 10 Essential Public Health Services: Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services. By understanding and controlling costs, the hospital can more effectively provide superior personal care.

Houston Methodist Hospital also contributes to public health in the following ways:

- Assuring competent public and personal health care workforce through internship programs and fellowships.
- Identifying community health problems through needs assessments.
- Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.

Surgical Cost Containment

Laparoscopic Cholecystectomy: Case Cost Review

By: TIMOTHY CLARK

Laparoscopic Cholecystectomy (Gall Bladder Removal) is one of the most frequently performed surgeries at Houston Methodist Hospital.

Specialized surgical supplies like the trocars pictured above are used to perform the procedure laparoscopically. Supply costs are not directly billed to the patient, but each surgeon has the latitude to choose the type and amount of supplies used.

I worked with a multidisciplinary team of nurses, nurse managers, supply chain specialists, and surgeons to evaluate the cost variation of laparoscopic surgery supplies between surgeons.

Our analysis of surgical volumes, preference cards, and supply contracts informed us of cost variations and individual outliers.

The results will allow us to address high resource utilizing physicians, better understand the consequences of supply contracts, and more efficiently treat patients.

Lessons Learned

- The ability to identify and solve problems is a valuable skill in any workplace.
- Being able to analyze data, and effectively communicate findings are equally important.

Practicum Highlights

- Attending hospital executive committee meetings
- Presenting my project findings to hospital Vice Presidents

Diagram of a trocar being used in laparoscopic surgery. Source: http://www.ethicon.com/healthcare-professionals/products/access/trocars/endopath-xcel-trocar
Re-application of Sunscreen

Campaign to promote the re-application of sunscreen among young adults to prevent skin cancer

By: Renu Deshpande

My practicum was through The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center and focused on the importance of sunscreen re-application and proper sun safety behaviors, especially among adolescents at outdoor events.

One of the ways MD Anderson sought to address the issue of promoting sun safety within the community was by hosting a booth at the American Junior Golf Association (AJGA) tournament in The Woodlands. Through this event, MD Anderson was able to specifically target young adults with significant, prolonged sun exposure.

At the tournament, we provided educational material, such as the banner shown on the left. These banners had information regarding proper sun safety practices, such as when to apply sunscreen and how to limit sun exposure.

We also passed out free sun protective gear, and spoke at the parents and player meetings. Sunscreen pumps were located throughout the course so that both participants and spectators would be protected on the course.

Special Event!
I attended the Shell Houston Open (an MD Anderson partnership) to observe how MD Anderson conducts community outreach events. While there I had the chance to watch Phil Mickelson play!

Lessons Learned
If your practicum revolves around an outdoor event, preparing for inclement weather and being flexible with alternatives are a must!!!
Patient Compliance and Technology

Public Health Significance

The first of the 10 Essential Public Health Services is to “Monitor health status to identify and solve community health problems”. Inherently, the ability to monitor patient compliance via a technological service satisfies this first essential. (See http://www.cdc.gov/nphpsp/essential-services.html)

Dr. Langabeer’s experience in informatics and healthcare entrepreneurial endeavors provided a perspective in my approach to the investigation of current competition and patient frustrations with current measures of compliance.

Improving the culture of patient compliance is the first step to improving a healthcare system whose burden will only increase with demand over the next decades. I can hope the strides made this summer will ease this future burden.

A Business Plan To Change The Scope of Patient-Physician Communication

By: Donovan Evans

The ability to engage communities in order to determine the source of behavioral patterns is the true root of public health. Engaging multiple demographics in the Houston area in efforts to determine the thought pattern of patient non-compliance has proven most rewarding for my summer practicum.

The compliance of patients across the healthcare industry is of peak interest, as the burden of non-compliance too often falls upon the sphere of public health.

Advances in modern technology, particularly the personalization of technological engagement, are the core of the business plan that centers my practicum. A mobile application/web-based platform centered at the crossroad of patient pain point and physician requirement for compliance will improve the overall healthcare burden on society beginning at the point of physician-patient communication.

Duties during your practicum

- The ability to speak with close friends and family members about the more frustrating aspects of their clinical experience was a rewarding personal measure in the merger of academics and personal life.
Assessing Program Processes and Outcomes

By: KELLY ANN GRACIA

My practicum took place at DePelchin Children’s Center, main campus in Houston. DePelchin is a non-profit organization that provides mental health, foster care, and adoption services for children across Texas.

I had the privilege of working with several different staff members on various projects in order to observe programs and services in full force. By observing ongoing processes in the organization, I was then able to help plan for the development, implementation, and evaluation of a future DePelchin program.

Public Health Significance

One of my responsibilities as part of my practicum experience with DePelchin was to help evaluate how well Trust-Based Relational Interventions (TBRI) are implemented and acted upon at DePelchin.

TBRI is a set of research-based models and family-based interventions for children who have undergone relationship-based trauma, such as abuse, neglect, or even multiple foster care placements. It is a driving principle at DePelchin to infuse the trauma-informed approach (adopted from SAMHSA’s concept) into their daily activities, practices, and programs.

Not only does DePelchin regularly seek appropriate, reliable, and well-researched information needed to ensure positive well-being outcomes for the children and families that they serve, but the organization also acts upon the information and implements their informed approaches effectively and appropriately.

Program development and evaluation fulfills the following Essential Public Health Services:

- Link people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable
- Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services.
- Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.

Practicum Activities

- Created process maps in order to visualize workflow for application processing for potential foster and adoptive parents. Goal was to standardize processes for the whole organization.
- Created informational sheets for different target audiences and purposes. I was able to observe different ways to communicate information about programs and services to different community members.
- Interviewed program leaders in order to understand the existing outcomes that are measured for current programs as well as perspectives over program evaluation.

Practicum Highlights

- Exposure to how programs are run and implemented at the local, organizational level in a real-world setting.
- Gained a better understanding of what needs to happen on a systematic level to support the successes of community programs and organizations.

Advice for Future Students

- One thing I learned is that you should effectively communicate what you hope to gain from the practicum to everyone you work with. Doing that allows them to facilitate your project and practicum experience, which is really helpful for such a short project time frame.

Tom Bellows Statue at Front Entrance taken by DePelchin

Source: http://www.depelchin.org/photos/set/1/
Public Health during Disasters

Expanding the Role of the Red Cross in Public Health

By: Rajiv Guha

I spent my practicum working at the American Red Cross NHQ in Washington DC in the Volunteer Services – Nursing and Health Department. The American Red Cross is a member of the international movement to alleviate human suffering in all forms.

During my time there I was able to work on a number of projects, including evaluation of communication systems throughout the organization (NHQ, Divisions, and Regions), develop processes and guidance for a novel Academic Service Learning program directed at nursing students, as well assist in integration of Red Cross biomedical operations.

In addition, I was able to work the Chief Nurse of the Red Cross on expanding the role of Red Cross Public Health Nurses during times of disaster.

Public Health Significance

My practicum experience most directly related to Essential Public Health Service 5: Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts.

One of the projects I worked on was on developing partnerships with nursing schools to get students involved in public health nursing and eventually Red Cross Public Health Nurses that would be called upon during times of disaster to work in shelters and other areas where public health may become an issue. A lot of my work was developing processes and evaluating different schools on their ability to be a part of the program.

This has become a major initiative ever since Hurricane Sandy, where many of the shelters that were established became incredibly unsanitary and dangerous to the public. Development of this program will bolster the public health educators and agents within the Red Cross, and in turn create safer environments during disasters.

Highlights of the Practicum:

- Weekly Lunch and Learn events with Red Cross Leadership, including the CEO, CFO, and VP of International Services and Biomedical Services.
- Working with leaders in Red Cross Nursing Services across the country.

Advice for Future Students

- Figure out what you love and where you want to be, and then pursue it.
- Be comfortable with not having all of the pieces of the puzzle.
- Don’t settle for something because it’s easy.
Universal Health Coverage (UHC)

Ensuring Coverage for All

I interned in the office of the director of the health systems development department. I worked with various people within the department and outside of it. I designed surveys on survey monkey, conducted literature reviews and assisted in administrative tasks. This was in addition to the research that I had to conduct to write my paper.

My duties involved setting meetings with people within the office to gather information to help write my paper. In collaboration with other interns in the office, I put together a guide for incoming interns. This was to help interns settle in both within the office and in Cairo.

I learned how the WHO functions as an organization and the role it plays in public health. I appreciated the concept of universal health coverage and its importance in ensuring a healthy productive population.

Public Health Significance

- The project relates to the following American Essential Public Health services:
  - Assure competent public and personal healthcare workforce.
  - Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services.
  - Link people to needed personal health services and ensure the provision of healthcare where otherwise unavailable

The paper focused on the elements of universal health coverage with respect to the current health situation in Sudan. It also proposed recommendations to consider when formulating policies on the road to universal health coverage.

This project has great public health significance for Sudan as it assesses the issues most relevant to public health such as access to care, affordability of care and more importantly community involvement in the process of care.

Special events/duties during your practicum

- I attended the WHO Representatives(WR) meeting with the Regional Director as well as a number of workshops.

Lessons Learned [OR] Advice for Future Students

- It’s always good to get to know at least one person in the workplace, they give you the ins and outs of the organization.
- Take this as an opportunity to evaluate yourself and your choice for a career.
Identifying Markers for Variance Reduction among 3rd Party Payers

By: Juan Hernandez

My practicum site this summer was MD Anderson’s Patient Business Services (PBS) department. My role was to analyze payment variance data for the hospital’s top payers (Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Medicare, Humana, etc.) and identify where staff should focus their efforts to secure reimbursements.

This was accomplished by using MD Anderson’s Experian software, where I would load several months’ worth of payment data and arrange variances (differences between expected and actual payments) by CPT codes, modifiers, and providers. From there, I would make visual representations so management could easily identify worthwhile opportunities to regain lost revenue.

Over the course of my practicum, I have gained valuable analytical skills and the ability to see financial issues from a broader point of view.

Public Health Significance

Of the 10 Essential Public Health Services, MD Anderson’s PBS sector is most closely aligned with goal 5: Developing policies that support individual and community health efforts.

The Experian software costs MD Anderson approximately $35,000 each month to use. If staff were not successful in at least recouping this amount in underpayments each month, then MD Anderson would ultimately operate in a deficit. This would have adverse effects on the hospital’s quality of care down the line. This, in turn, affects patients’ health outcomes.

MD Anderson also accomplishes goal 7: Linking people to personal health services when otherwise unavailable. Despite the staff’s best efforts, a small percentage of payment variances are eventually written off as bad debt – mostly likely from uninsured patients. Although bad debt is frowned upon, MD Anderson still prioritizes patient’s health over their ability to consistently pay.

Advice for Future Students

- Please go above and beyond your learning objectives while on the job. While fulfilling these is important, do not let four or five bullet points define your whole experience.

Practicum Highlights

- Identified top 20 sources of variances (by CPT code) collectively worth over $500,000.
- Met with management team and executive director to display results.
- Took Strengths Finder assessment to discover key personality strengths.
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT)-identified Women and Transgender Men Health Policy

Overview – Lesbian Health Initiative Project
For my practicum, I created a health policy brief. The brief included an overview of LHI’s population, need, and policy recommendations. I used preexisting data from LHI’s archives but also found many resources and data on my own. The brief will be distributed to community organizations, policy coalitions, funders, and the LGBT community. I worked closely with LHI’s staff to create a brief that represented LHI’s scope and goals.

Public Health Significance
This project addressed two of the essential services of public health: investigating health problems and developing plans to support the community.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT)-identified Women and Transgender Men experience many health disparities:
- Lesbian and bisexual women have a higher risk for breast and cervical cancer than heterosexual women
- Transgender women face mental health issues, depression, and suicide.

Lesbian and bisexual women and transgender men are among the most discriminated and uninsured populations in Texas. LGBT consumers in the South are twice as likely to be uninsured than their heterosexual counterparts.

Policy Recommendations

Expanding Medicaid in Texas
Increased health insurance enrollment in the Marketplace and through employer provided policies, Medicare, and CHIP/Medicaid

Nondiscrimination protections for employment, housing, and credit

Collection of sexual orientation and gender identification data through local, state, and national research

Advice for Future Students

- Start your practicum search early
- Don’t limit yourself to just the Houston area!
- Speak with your community preceptor about attending as many meetings, conferences, and events as possible

Photos and logo courtesy of http://lhihouston.org/
Project Saving Smiles (PSS)

Quality of Services in a School Based Dental Sealants Program

Michael Juma

PSS aims to prevent dental caries among second graders in schools within low income neighborhoods in Houston. At the PSS visit, a services package of dental health education, fluoride varnish and sealant placement is provided. We evaluated the quality of services by interviewing the PSS team and assessing dental health and knowledge among students one year after each student’s PSS visit.

We entered and analyzed records for 10% of students followed up for quality check, one year after PSS visit. Data collections were completely filled and had all variables required to assess services quality. At one year-

- Prevalence of caries was 5 per 1000 students but 5 times higher among teeth with no sealant
- 87.8% sealed teeth still had sealant on at least one surface
- Knowledge about dental health remained high
- Knowledge about routine dental wellness and prevention services remained low.

We compiled an evaluation report.

Public Health Significance

Dental caries are a significant cause of morbidity increasing a family’s healthcare expenditure and reducing school attendance. By targeting low income neighborhoods, PSS reduces disparities in access to dental services. Evaluating quality of services helps to assess PSS’s effectiveness in promoting behaviors conducive to dental health and the lifespan of used sealant and its effectiveness in preventing dental caries. This practicum relates to the essential service of public health of evaluating effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health.

Special events/duties during your practicum

- Agreed on method and final product with project leader
- Interviewed project staff
- Entered and analyzed data, and compiled a

Lessons Learned

- Involving stakeholders is an important aspect of project evaluation
- Always assess a project for in-built systems to continuously collect data relevant to its evaluation
The second assignment I was given was creating an Ambassador program. CHI St. Luke's requested a streamlined method of connecting community outreach requests with services from the organization. This would facilitate requests for speakers, health educators, health fair booths, or screenings.

Public Health Significance

CHI St. Luke’s is a non-profit organization and thus they have a community outreach aspect they must include as a part of their services. In accordance, they are required to conduct a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA). This is a document that outlines the major health needs within the community and a list of strategies for how the organization plans to meet these needs. In accordance with the Ten Essential Public Health Services, this works toward a large number of the services such as:

- Monitoring health status to identify and solve community health problems,
- Informing, educating, and empowering people about health issues
- Mobilizing community partnerships and action to identify and solve health problems
- Develops policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts
- Links people to needed personal health problems, and assures the provision of health care where otherwise unavailable.

The primary public health essential service for the work I did is in the development of policies and plans to target the community health efforts.

Advice for Future Practicum Students

Find a practicum that gives you the opportunity to work for a preceptor that places a stake in your career development. This person can serve as a positive influence on your work and can later on become a mentor.
Charter: Wellness for All

This practicum experience relates to the fourth Essential Service of Public Health, ‘mobilize community partnerships and action to identify and solve health problems’.

Specifically, we worked towards mobilizing community partnerships by working with local physicians to reorganize where and in some cases how care would be provided to the Houston community.

Specific focus on health were in the areas of: Digestive Wellness, Cancer Care, Men’s Health, Pain Management, Palliative Care, and Sleep Centers.

To develop the business strategies, we used a standard existing business plan, and focused on areas such as marketing data and needs assessments to determine the best location for each of the practices.

As a guideline for future endeavors, we created a Charter to capture some of the key foci.

It is only with collaboration amongst excellent team members that enabled us to work together with a little P.A.B.S.T. in an effort to manage wellness for all.


By: SHEFALI KOTHARI

During my summer practicum at the Baylor College of Medicine, majority of my time was spent on projects within the Business Development department within Clinical Affairs.

I assisted a fellow by attending meetings which were used as a basis of communicating next steps throughout the organization – from the Office of the President, through Managers, to the individual departments.

A process map helped to identify each of the steps along the way.

There were three meetings that were scheduled regularly to address different points of the process being refined. My duties ranged from note taking, synchronizing information, tracking recruits, to scheduling meetings as needed.

The final product resulted in a process map along with a checklist and traffic light report created to allow physician recruitment to be more efficient, and easier on all involved.

Academic Integration Council Retreat

• Ice Breaker: one truth & one lie - encourages unity
• Focus groups are a valuable tool to share ideas and foster communication across organizations

“Patience is a Virtue”

• Whether it’s required to sit through a meeting, play a game of dots (see below), or make all of your dreams come true, patience is a virtue.
Public Health Significance

Mission:
“The mission of The CAC is to provide a professional, compassionate and coordinated approach to the treatment of sexually abused children and their families and to serve as an advocate for all children in our community (http://cachouston.org/our-mission/).”

The Ten Essential Public Health Services:
The CAC does all of the Ten Essential Public Health Services: Monitor, Diagnose and investigate, Inform educate and empower, Mobilize Community Partnerships, Develop policies and plans, Enforce laws and regulations, Link, Assure, and Evaluate. They truly understand that research connects and drives these services. My practicum position in an example of how they value evidence-based research. I feel fortunate to have had this leadership experience to help further improve the health of our community.

Practicum Highlights

- Learning about and navigating iRIS, the UTHealth Internal Review Board system.
- Finding 45 articles related to Children Advocacy Centers.
- Using ATLAS.ti as I created my evidence table.

Lessons Learned/Advice for Future Students

- Literature searches are fun! They are like a hunt!
- Tip: Use the references from the articles you find to find even more articles.
- Tip: Ask for ideas of good keywords from the person who assigns the literature search.

Collaboration Study Coordinator

By: Elizabeth Leass

Objectives:
The main objectives of my practicum are to help The Children’s Assessment Center (CAC) and The University of Texas School of Public Health (UTSPH) generate research ideas for scientific publication and to help coordinate the collaboration.

Example of Role:
As the study coordinator, I helped apply for Internal Review Board approval to conduct a secondary analysis of The CAC’s de-identified data.

Final Product:
As part of my practicum, I created a detailed literature search, an evidence table of the articles from the literature search, a memorandum of understanding, a list of research ideas, and a protocol for the IRB application. This information is being used by The CAC and UTSPH to help determine which research topics to initially pursue as part of their collaboration.

Ten Essential Public Health Services

Image from http://cachouston.org
Image from https://sph.uth.edu/

Summer 2015 • Elizabeth Leass • The Children’s Assessment Center • CAC/UTSPH Research Collaboration
Implementing an eICU Telehealth Program
By: Cordelia Nagle

This summer I was given the opportunity to shadow key executives at Westchester Medical Center and support them on their various projects. A major project Westchester Medical Center is working on is implementing an eICU center. This project involved many different disciplines from the project management team, ICU nurses, IT, consultants physicians to administrators. It was really interesting to see the different parties collaborate and all of the moving pieces that went into this project. This project was very timeline specific and involved a go live date of September 15th.

Public Health Significance
Making an investment in telehealth is the foundation for a hospital’s future success and improvement in the quality of patient care. The eICU involves the installation of cameras and monitors in each patient's room in the ICU that connects to the nursing stations in the CORE. These monitors create an extra layer of patient monitoring in addition to the bedside nurses that are located directly in the ICU.

For example, Westchester Medical Center is also a teaching hospital and will have resident physicians staffing the ICU. This technology allows the residents to confer with the RNs in the CORE if they have any questions about a course of action. Ultimately by investing in this technology, WMC is confirming its commitment to patient safety and the quality of patient care.
A Summer to Learn and Grow at Houston Methodist Hospital

By: THAO NGUYEN

This summer of 2015 I have had the privilege to work at the Center for Professional Excellence (CPE) at Houston Methodist Hospital (HMH). My main focus at CPE was to investigate nursing physical assessment baseline and design a tool to assist nurses with their assessment process. The goal of the project was to improve nursing competency and quality, which ultimately would improve patient care quality and safety.

I collaborated with the CPE staff and educators to analyze nursing physical assessment baseline. Combining with best practice standards, we created the Head2Toe Visual Guide to provide nurses with an effective physical assessment tool. The pilot phase of this project examined the feasibility of the tool and provided recommendations for future processes.

Public Health Significance

One Public Health Essential Service that most closely relates to this practicum experience:

**Number 8: Assure competent public and personal health care workforce.**

As a well-known healthcare enterprise, Houston Methodist System focuses on assuring its workforce’s competency and quality.

HMH in particular is the best place to work in the Houston area, and the organization also holds great respect from national and international healthcare industries.

To maintain its reputation, HMH works closely with CPE to provide continuing education programs and initiatives. This project is part of a larger initiative from CPE.

A quality nursing workforce is fuel for a great healthcare system. Understanding this, HMH is driven to be the best in the industry and to be “Leading Medicine.”

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Practicum Highlights

- Introduced the Head2Toe Visual Guide to help nurses with physical assessment
- Gained knowledge of project management and operation of a center of excellence

Lessons Learned

- Relationship matters. No matter what your title is or where you rank within the organization, knowing people both professionally and personally helps you learn and grow tremendously.
- Find connections with others. Search for mentor(s) and peers who have positive effects in your career.

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Physical Assessment

Public Health Significance

Food Allergies pose a growing public health concern in the U.S. According to Food Allergy Research and Education (FARE), food allergies affect 15 million Americans including 1 in 13 children. Allergic Reactions can be mild to severe (Anaphylaxis) and have many effects on children, families and their environment.

Texas Children’s Department of Allergy and Immunology performs all ten essential services of Public Health. However, some of the most influential include informing, educating and empowering people about food allergies and assuring a competent workforce to intervene in a food allergic reaction.

The Department also conducts an Oral Peanut Immunotherapy Trial via a desensitization process where patients swallow tiny, increasing amounts of peanut over time in the hopes of diminishing the effects of peanut allergic reactions. (Texas Children’s Hospital Launches Immunotherapy Study, 2014).

Improving Food Allergy Awareness and Epinephrine Coverage in Schools

By: Chinelo Nsobundu, RN, BSN

This Summer I interned on a joint quality improvement project between Texas Children’s Hospital Dept. of Allergy, and Immunology and Baylor College of Medicine. My project strives to improve food allergy awareness and epinephrine coverage in schools by educating the Houston I.S.D community via online education and/or in-person training about Food Allergies, Signs and Symptoms, how to use an epinephrine pen, and roles and responsibilities of school staff in a food allergic emergency. As an intern, I was responsible for analyzing data on the learning and training efficiency of H.I.S.D. staff, participating in local events, and beginning the groundwork for manuscript submission in the Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology.

Deliverables: Background and Methods of Manuscript, and Data Analysis of 2013-2014 & 2014-2015 with my partner Dr. Ritu Gupta, UTSPH Dallas Student.

Findings: When online training was made mandatory for all schools in 2014-2015, there was an increase in online training initiation, however, since the time commitment was not conducive for schools, many staff failed to complete the entire online training.

Lessons Learned

• Be Proactive and Ask Questions
• Work Hard
• Apply yourself

Special events/ duties during your practicum

• Attended the 37th Annual Belle Blackwell Conference in Cypress, Texas as an Exhibitor where my co-workers and I presented Food Allergy Resources and Helpful Information to School Nurses working in different districts

Lessons Learned

• Be Proactive and Ask Questions
• Work Hard
• Apply yourself
By: Shen Qu

My practicum was in the Oncology Department at Baylor St. Luke’s Medical center, under the mentorship of Ms. Ursula Dennis. The project I was involved in, focused on medical oncology services and radiation oncology services to cancer patients. I did some marketing research on the oncology service line and tried to find potential physicians could work with us. And I also worked on the Cancer Facts Sheet and the Self Risk Assessment Questionnaire in the patients education program and screening program.

This practicum was a great learning experience.

Public Health Significance

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

1. Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues.
2. Monitor health status to identify and solve community

The Cancer Education and Screening program I was working on could help people in the communities to understand cancer and help them to prevent cancer.

And the marketing analysis could help the Baylor St. Luke’s Medical center put the resource to the place really need it.
I interned at Baylor College of Medicine with the Patient Access Team throughout the Summer of 2015. I learned many valuable lessons about myself and about working in the healthcare industry in general.

My preceptor, Terri Le, let me wear different hats throughout the summer and allowed me to experience the different roles managers play. I acted as a detective when I secret shopped the front desk staff in order to evaluate the quality of their customer service. I played principal when Terri and I met with poor performers to attempt to improve customer service. I was a researcher when I learned about Press Ganey. Lastly, I worked as an innovator when I developed a plan to improve “Information about Delays.”

Check-in Sheet I created to improve communication between front desk and medical staff

Public Health Significance

My practicum was related most to assuring that there was a competent healthcare workforce with Baylor College of Medicine. With my secret shopping, I evaluated the Front Desk Team on a very strict rubric. Key components included ensuring each employee verified date of birth and asked about fever status. Secret Shopping ensures the people working at the front desk are doing all that they are expected to do and the meetings with the poor performers hold employees accountable to those expectations.

My experience also dealt with evaluating the effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal health services. Press Ganey is a method of monitoring patient satisfaction and thereby evaluating the quality of personal health services. I had to research why a department did well or poorly and what could be done to improve it. I focused on “Information about Delays” because it needed the most improvement. I determined that a main cause of the breakdown was poor communication between the front desk team and the medical team. I developed a check-in sheet to foster more communication and began rolling it out.

Advice for Future Practicum Students

• Make yourself uncomfortable. Do things outside your comfort zone because you will grow as a person
• Ask questions.
• Express genuine interest. If you have an interest in a certain project or certain topic, express that interest to your preceptor and they may be able to help you learn more about it.
• Smile! A huge part of customer service is giving the impression that you are friendly and can help!
IMPROVING STAFFING EFFICIENCY

**Practicum Highlights**

- Exposure to operational aspects of an urban, 600 bed hospital
- An opportunity to find creative solutions to an ongoing staffing problem
- Observation of different leadership styles
- Feedback from experienced staff on challenges related to patient flow

**Advice for Future Practicum Students**

- Don’t be afraid to ask questions and offer suggestions. The skills gained from SPH coursework, as well as, the outside perspective you bring can be valuable.

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**Decreasing Sitter Utilization in a Tertiary Care Center**

By: Abigail Solomon

While at my practicum site I had the opportunity to shadow two nursing supervisors, whose responsibilities included overseeing staffing assignments and patient placement, addressing customer service issues, supporting nursing staff during emergencies, and coordinating after-hours procedures.

An aspect of our staffing responsibilities included provision of constant observation (through the use of “patient care companions” or “sitters”) for patients deemed a safety risk to themselves or others.

My project sought to ameliorate the overuse of these sitters by outlining gaps in the current process and proposing a new methodology for the allotment of sitters based on pre-specified criteria. Some policy changes were also proposed, including active oversight by unit managers.

**Public Health Significance**

While my experience working in a hospital encompassed individual, rather than community, health needs several essential public services were fulfilled. These included monitoring, diagnosing and investigating health problems (as it relates to the hospital); policy development; law and regulation enforcement; and assurance of a competent workforce.

Taken from the perspective of addressing the hospital’s needs my practicum role was centered around monitoring, diagnosing, and ultimately resolving nursing unit and hospital-wide problems. The aim of both my summer project and the nursing supervisor role is to increase hospital efficiency, indirectly, enhancing the health of the broader community.

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1. https://mediasrc.bcm.edu/2014/3c/baylor-st-lukes-medical-center.jpg
Cancer Program Evaluation

By: Darcye Sorinmade

CHI Baylor St. Luke’s Department of Oncology provides quality, evidence-based care to patients and the community. The Oncology Service Line is dedicated to creating a module for healthier communities as well as identifying the healthcare needs and disparities of the communities and patients served.

As part of this initiative, I was responsible for assessing cancer rates in Harris, Fort Bend, Galveston, and Brazoria counties and implementing prevention and screening programs that are in compliance with the Commission on Cancer Standards 4.1 and 4.2. This program also addressed access to quality care, cancer education, smoking cessation programs, and survivorship plans.

Public Health Significance

Cancer is a major public health issue in both the United States and abroad. According to the National Cancer Institute, cancer is the most common cause of death in the United States. In 2015, 1,658,370 new cases of cancer will be diagnosed in the United States.

Four Essential Public Health Services that relate to this practicum opportunity are:

- **Monitor Community Health**: The program examines cancer rates in the Houston community and surrounding counties by performing a community-based needs assessment
- **Inform, Educate, and Empower**: The oncology program is responsible for educating the community about cancer and its affect on human life through cancer prevention events and educational seminars
- **Link to Provide Care**: The Oncology program provides individuals access to quality care and screenings
- **Evaluate Effectiveness**: Evaluates current screening programs and treatment

Advice for Future Students

- Always ask questions
- Keep an open mind
- Choose a practicum that you are passionate about and that aligns with your professional goals

Practicum Highlights

- Participated in the patient experience workgroup
- Identified the major cancers that affect the Houston community
- Assisted in the design and implementation of a cancer outreach program
Healthy Communities: Surgical Program

Developing/Implementing a Volunteer Surgical Program

By: Eboni Stafford

I participated in the Healthy Communities Initiative at CHI St. Luke’s Health. My major project was to assist in planning and implementing a Surgical Program that serves the uninsured and underinsured population in the greater Houston area. This program provides general surgery at no charge for those who qualify. My approach to this project was to conduct research on similar programs first to see what worked for them. Afterwards, we identified partners within and outside of the organization. We met to discuss what would be expected, to organize details and mobilize internal volunteers. The final product is a program that is set to start in September. This program increases access to health care and helps to create and serve a healthier community. I also worked on other projects, performed data entry and attended several meetings, which opened my eyes to the different jobs available within the hospital setting for those in public health. I was able to attend community meetings that discussed legislature, grants, and brainstorming new ways to approach public health issues and create solutions.

Public Health Significance

This topic is an important public health concern because many, specifically in the Houston area, are uninsured or not insured at all. St. Luke’s is committed to serve the community in which it operates. This program provides them access to medical care that will increase the quality of life for these patients.

St. Luke’s worked along with a partner and multiple departments to coordinate this initiative. This experience closely relates to three of the essential public health services:

- Mobilize community partnerships and action to identify and solve health problems.
- Link people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable.
- Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.

Advice for Future Students

- Be flexible and attend meetings outside your interest so that you are able to see many aspects of operations.
- Network and use your mentor as a resource, they have been in your shoe.

Special events during your practicum

- Developing an “Elevator Speech”
- Meetings attended:
  - BUILD
  - Healthy Living Matters
  - Monthly Hospital Administration Meeting
  - Surgical Program Planning

CHI St. Luke’s Health

Imagine better health.℠

CHI St. Luke’s Health is dedicated to enhancing community health through high-quality, cost-effective care. In partnership with our physicians and community partners, we are committed to excellence and compassion in caring for the whole person while creating healthier communities.

http://www.chistlukeshealth.org/why-choose-us

Summer 2015 • Eboni Stafford • CHI St. Luke’s Health • Healthy Communities: Surgical Program
Establishing the Approach

By: Latisha Taylor

At CHI St. Luke’s Health, the Healthy Communities Department is champion of the hospital’s public health efforts in linking the hospital and the community.

The goal of the department is to collaborate with the communities CHI St. Luke’s Health serves to create programs, activities, and strategic initiatives designed to address social determinants of health in vulnerable populations.

To assist the department in reaching its objectives to serve the community, the main focus of my practicum was formulating a strategic plan to provide structure and measurable goals to a new violence prevention program for the CHI St. Luke’s Health regional service area.

Public Health Significance

Violence is a major problem facing people in all communities. Statistics from various sources and organizations speak to the fact that violence does not discriminate in its selection of victims. Data also shows that violence goes unreported, and victim services are either underutilized or underfunded.

In response to violence in its service area, the Healthy Communities Department’s mobilization of a taskforce to identify community needs, development of a strategic plan to address violence, and formulation of evaluation measures to gauge the effectiveness of the plan contributes at least 3 essential public health services described by the CDC.

While my time working in the Healthy Communities Department was brief, the experience provided a valuable opportunity to see how public health practices are used by hospitals to solve community and population health problems faced by its service area.
Preventing Falls and Falls with Injury, in Stroke Patients, 90-Days Post Discharge from the Houston Methodist Rehabilitation Center

By: Jocelyn Triplett

The Hospital Administration/Operations Internship Program at Houston Methodist is a 10-week program exposing interns to the core operations of a healthcare facility. Interns are also assigned a Lean/Six Sigma project to further develop project management and performance improvement skills. My summer project investigated the exigency of educational intervention aimed towards reducing falls and falls with injury, among stroke patients, following discharge. A retrospective study of health outcomes data collected between 2013 - Q1 2015 was conducted to track if the progress a stroke patient achieved in Rehab was sustained 90-days post discharge. Data extracted from outcomes reports was grouped into frequency tables by falls and falls with injury further stratified by CMS customized age, gender, and ethnicity groups with the purpose of identifying demographic-specific trends between the two study groups. Results from my analysis indicated an overall decline in the stroke patient population, magnifying a continuous increasing trend in falls and falls with injury +19.0% and +16.0%, respectively, from 2013 thru Q1 2015. A cumulative average of 46.7% of falls and 44.7% of falls with injury occurred in patients 75 and older, the highest reported amongst all age groups. Findings emphasized the need for standardized education prior to discharge. Recommendations included an Interdisciplinary Rehab Discharge Class and broadcasting a falls prevention video on closed circuit television.

Public Health Significance

Traditionally hospitals and public health organizations have worked independently from one another. With the adoption of the Affordable Care Act and an increasingly shared vision of managing population health, the two entities are working more closely than ever before. Houston Methodist Hospital shares in this vision as a non-profit operator catering to the needs of the community. My project addressed the public health essential service of evaluation of the effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of health services, in that the trending and analysis of outcomes data revealed areas of improvement in Rehab’s health education and provided the opportunity to present recommendations to improve patient outcomes post-discharge.
Hospital Acquired Infections (HAIs)

Are You Aware of the Role You Play?
By: Ariel Turner

West Houston Medical Center (WHMC), and many hospitals across the country are implementing evidence-based practices to help prevent hospital acquired infections.

Catheter-associated urinary tract infections, surgical site infections, and central line associated bloodstream infections are a few.

Encouraging nurses, and patients especially, to be involved is still a novel idea but quite integral in the process.

Regular maintenance, education, and interactions were a great way to push awareness and learn how each person contributes to better patient care and prevention!

Working with nurses to address fall outs leading to infections were completed using case analyses.

Weekly environment of care & isolation rounds ensure the hospital setting is appropriate and safe for the community.

Special events/duties/highlights
- Increasing and hygiene compliance hospital-wide with “secret shopper” data and brainstorming
- Working with the Lead infection control practitioner to organize an Infectious Disease Response Team

Public Health Significance

- Monitor health status to identify and solve community health problems.
  - The WHMC Infection Control team monitors certain “notifiable conditions” and reports data to the city and state to identify any potential outbreaks or community health problems.

- Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community.
  - Upon identifying issues, such as an outbreak or consistent errors in patient knowledge, the Infection Control team addresses the problem with in-service education, utilizing community partnerships, or root cause analyses.

- Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues.
  - This means direct clinical staff, non-clinical staff, AND patients! This may be through demonstrations, videos, conversations, and sharing written information.

Lessons Learned

The community has a vital role in the prevention of HAIs. They should routinely be encouraged to ask questions, seek information, and discuss practices with their healthcare providers. “Did you perform hand hygiene?” or “May I have my dressings changed?” could make all the difference!

Healthcare-Associated Infections (HAIs)

- What are they?
  - Bloodstream infections, urinary tract infections, pneumonia, surgical site infections

- The Problem
  - 1.7 million HAIs in hospitals—unknown burden in other healthcare settings
  - 99,000 deaths per year
  - $26-33 billion in added healthcare costs

- HAI Prevention
  - Implementing what we know for prevention can lead to up to a 70% or more reduction in HAIs

Quick facts regarding Hospital Acquired Infections and their relevance as a public health issue.

Photo credit: RidRx Infection Prevention
Emergency Room Follow-Up Protocol

Practicum Highlights

- Creating a questionnaire to call the patients and determine where the breakdown in communication occurred.
- Obtaining a list of patients that did not make the follow-up appointments and determining the barriers that patients are facing.

Barriers in Communication to Patients Keeping Follow-Up

By: PAULA VASICHKO

When patients are discharged from the Emergency Room with a diagnosis of a chronic condition and without a primary care physician to follow up with regarding that issue, the patients receive a follow-up appointment to follow-up at the Robert B. Green clinic with Dr. Du. Recently, this process was changed and the follow-up rate dropped significantly.

The first part of my project was interviewing an emergency room physician regarding the current protocol, a medical assistant that used to work with Dr. Du regarding experiences with patients that do attend the follow-up appointments, and the person that used to be in charge of making the follow-up appointments before the system was changed. The next portion of my project involves calling the patients that do not make the follow-up appointments to determine the barriers.

Public Health Significance

My practicum experience related to three main Public Health Services: develop policies and plans that support individual and community efforts, evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services; and assure competent public and personal health care workforce.

One specific example is the dramatic decrease in follow-up rate since the change in system for scheduling follow-up appointments. When such a change occurred, the public health aspect naturally intervened to attempt to determine where the problems are occurring since this change. Also, when speaking with staff at Dr. Du’s clinic, many patients who attend the follow-up appointments are unclear as to why they are there, which shows another breakdown in communication that can be amended.
Transgender and HIV

HIV Risk Factors and Discrimination Experiences Among Transgender in the Houston Area

I have worked for my internship at Bureau of HIV, STD and Viral Hepatitis Prevention, City of Houston Health Department (HDHHS) for three months. In my internship, I was assigned to analyze the dataset regarding HIV positive transgender in the Houston Area. My practicum outcome is a study report on “Demographics Characteristics, Risk Behaviors and Discrimination experiences among Transgender and Gender non Conforming People in the Houston Area.”

It is stated that transgender communities in the United States are among the groups at the highest risk of HIV infection. They have experienced high rates of violence and discrimination that lead to structural and social inequalities. Many studies lack information about access to HIV care, risk factors and discrimination experienced by transgender communities. I had a chance to take part in finding out more evidences on this issue in my practicum.

Hip Hop for HIV Concert

I also participated in planning section of Hip Hop for HIV Awareness, organized by HDHHS. It is a 5-day activity where Houston teens and young adults received free tickets to a Hip Hop concert as a reward for testing for HIV and other STDs.

Public Health Significance

My Practicum focused on research component of essential services of public health. Transgender are the most vulnerable marginalized populations in the United States. They have experienced highest HIV burden while little research is conducted to find out their HIV risk factors, discriminations and disparities and barriers towards access to HIV care. Therefore, more efforts and emphasis on research for evidences for ways to reduce HIV burden of transgender population are needed.

I am really satisfied with my contribution and effort in my practicum to overcome this public health challenge.

Lessons Learned [OR] Advice for Future Practicum Students

Practicum experiences are valuable and supportive to our future public health career pathways and it is necessary to choose wisely and appropriately to fit with own interests and prospective career pathways.
Understanding Financial Management

Building Foundations From Within

By: Qianning Zhang

The Bone & Joint Clinic of Houston is undergoing a transition phase and will officially become an acquired entity under the Houston Methodist starting October 1, 2015. I assisted with the entire process from financial management to marketing.

Healthcare Accounting/Cost Structure
The two major components of healthcare accounting are physician compensation and invoice payments. The three sections of cost structures are vendor lists, patient refunds, and employee compensation. BJC practices transparency to control costs when reviewing pending transactions. I handled the final stage by confirming the amounts charged and addressing potential discrepancies before mailing out checks.

Financial Outcome Optimization
I finalized patient refunds and cleared accounts receivables by creating internal claims. Refunds are currently mailed out. Accounts receivables will continue to settle up even after the transition.

Public Health Significance
This practicum addresses the following of the 10 Essential Services of Public Health:

- Assure competent public and personal health care workforce.
- Link people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable.

Competence & Quality Assurance
The purpose of ICD-10 Readiness Training modules is to prepare administrative and clinical staff for the new global diagnostic coding tool. For further assurance, BJC holds meetings with external entities to stay updated with new practice strategies that will improve the overall quality of care.

Access to Healthcare Services
Due to effective cost controls, division of labor, strong public relations, and overall administrative competence, BJC’s internal structures enable doctors, nurses, and medical assistants to focus on what they do best: providing quality services and necessary information with which patients can seek ancillary or tertiary care when deemed necessary.

Special Activities
- Assisted with drafting agendas for physician meetings, which covered emerging issues such as physician reimbursement.
- Attended monthly conference calls to discuss the costs and benefits of proposed changes.
- Conducted ICD-10 Readiness Training and assisted clinical and administrative employees with AthenaHealth registration.
- Handled public relations with Houston Methodist and various awards entities to further market BJC and its doctors.

Advice for Future Students
- Always remember the bottom line.
- Given the clinic's small size, you will have opportunities to expose yourself to various aspects of healthcare administration. Use them to your advantage.
- Keep a daily report of your works. Use your log as a reference tool with which to generate a better understanding and a bigger picture of how divisions interact.
- Never hesitate to ask questions about the process. This shows your willingness to learn.
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/