Public Health Practice

Assessment

Policy Development

Assurance

UTHenalty
School of Public Health
Practicum Experiences
Fall 2015 - MD/MPH
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 gain a deeper understanding of public health practice, interact with professionals in the field, and expand their repertoire of professional skills.

This 18th edition e-magazine showcases student practicum experiences throughout the Fall 2015 semester. Prior editions may be accessed on the practicum website at https://sph.uth.edu/academics/public-health-practice/#tabs-2 (click on the Reports tab)
## Practicum Topics

**Houston/El Paso/San Antonio**

*Number of Students: 11*

### MD/MPH Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integration of Public Health in Physician Clinical Practice</td>
<td>Johanna Gerwer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Health Assessment</td>
<td>Carolyn Henkel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving Cancer Rehabilitation</td>
<td>Jamie Fuega</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population Growth and Traumatic Injury</td>
<td>JJ Klein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piloting a Health Education Program</td>
<td>Jessica Liu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urgency of HPV Vaccination in U.S.</td>
<td>Timothy Overton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clint Community Assessment</td>
<td>Laura Palmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissecting “The Devil’s Triangle”</td>
<td>Anthony Radosevich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teen Pregnancy Prevention</td>
<td>Olivia Thornton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society, Community, and the Individual</td>
<td>Meredith Trubitt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Elizario Community Assessment</td>
<td>Loryn Wilson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Integration of Public Health in Physician Clinical Practice

Practicum Background:

- Patients come from diverse backgrounds and communities that influence their health.
- As part of our medical school curriculum we are invited to explore a local neighborhood to learn about health in its greater context.

Lessons Learned:

Providing health care to patients is the role of a physician. The opportunity to explore a local community allowed me to gain insight into some of the health care challenges that a physician and patient face. Limited access to health care, few proper nutritional options, and safety concerns can have a detrimental impact on health making the care provided by a clinician only one part of patient wellness.

Segundo Barrio, 79901: Historically, Segundo Barrio was one of the poorest zip codes in the United States. Segundo Barrio is located on the Mexico-United States Border and serves as a port of entry for many Mexicans coming to the United States.

Barriers to Health: Segundo Barrio has previously had limited health care services, outdoor facilities, and grocery outlets. Due to many residents not holding United States residency and low income households access to health care is limited. Further, there are few grocery stores in the area making it difficult to obtain fresh produce and appropriate food choices without the use of a car or public transportation. The ability to safely partake in outdoor activities is jeopardized by gang violence and poorly maintained street and public infrastructure.

Community Assets: Despite its many challenges Segundo Barrio has a vibrant sense of pride. Segundo Barrio is the historic heart of El Paso. Recently, many projects and non-profits have formed to help improve living conditions for those in the 79901 and surrounding neighborhoods. Among those resources is La Fe a social justice nonprofit that serves the community as a multisite health center, HIV/ AIDS treatment facility, and bilingual charter school. Another asset in the community is Annunciation House a service provider and housing outlet for refugees and the homeless. Additionally, many parks and public spaces have been created to permit safe outdoor participation as well as nonprofit agencies like YWCA.

Public Health Significance

The practicum experience addressed aspects of several of the community health essential services. One service that my project highlighted was the importance of utilizing community partnerships and action to improve health challenges.

By: Johanna Gerwer
Community Health Assessment

Montana Vista Community Health Assessment
By: Carolyn Henkel

I completed a Community Health Assessment (CHA) of Montana Vista, TX with the TTUHSC Paul L. Foster School of Medicine in El Paso.

My part was to perform a hands-on assessment of various locations including the fire department, police department, town outskirts (dumping grounds), grocery store, and elementary school.

Among the major community health hazards seen was extensive public dumping, which leads to exposed metal waste in backyards and play areas. This lead to increased injuries in elementary students.

The most prevalent health condition among local elementary students was asthma. This could be linked to the lack of building codes and clean water, which lead to unprofessional renovations, and dusty, dirty houses.

Public Health Significance
The Public Health Essential Service that most closely relates to my practicum experience is the service of “diagnosing and investigating health problems and health hazards in the community.”

The purpose of a CHA is to determine deficiencies, challenges, and assets of a community. This work should ideally culminate in a plan to act on these needs, make smart use of the assets, and improve the overall health status of a populace.

The Montana Vista Community Health Assessment served to inform the local public of existing hazards that the residents may not have realized could have a negative impact on their health.

This report was created to empower the community to strive to both diminish stated deficiencies as well as increase their use of regional assets.

Practicum Highlights
- Learned about a completely different way of life
- Learned to recognize potential health hazards that may face patients in rural areas

Advice for Future Practicum Students
- The most important thing is to be sure to make your practicum one of those rare learning experiences that’s actually fun! It’s easy – just find something you have a genuine interest in and have a blast!
Population Growth and Traumatic Injury

Impact of Population Growth on Traumatic Injury Incidence and Regional Resources
By: JJ Klein

For my practicum experience I hoped to combine my interest in population health with trauma and orthopedic injury.

My preceptor and I decided on a project that would analyze the number of traumatic injuries as population spiked in areas that lacked the infrastructure to support such growth.

Specifically, we predicted that the incidence would rise disproportionately to the population increase. We also predicted that this would be exacerbated by a lack of resources to accommodate this growth.

We collected data through the Southwest Texas Regional Advisory Council’s Trauma Registry to assess our predictions. Our final product will be a peer-reviewed article.

Public Health Significance

Our project will allow for hospitals to better prepare for increases in traumatic injury volume. This will include predicting when increases will occur and mobilizing the potential resources necessary to care for each patient.

This falls most in line with two Public Health Essential Services:

- Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community
- Assure competent public and personal health care workforce

University Hospital (UH) in San Antonio is the only Level 1 Trauma Center in the South Texas Region. This means that any level 1 trauma injury from San Antonio down to the Texas/Mexico border will be taken to UH for care. Research directed toward anticipating patient volume and resource limitations is key when serving such a large and diverse population.

Special events/duties during your practicum

- Utilized relationship with Southwest Texas Regional Advisory Council on Trauma
- Worked through IRB approval process with mentor

Advice for Future Students

- This project can truly be whatever you can dream up, and your advisor will do a great job working with you to make it happen. Look for a topic that relates to interests you already have for the best experience!
Inform, Educate, & Empower

This health education intervention meets the CDC’s Essential Services of Public health by informing, education and empowering individuals about a number of health issues. Topics covered over the ten-week course were chosen based off of a health needs assessment of the adult population at SAMM TLLC. Topics included heart health (diabetes and high blood pressure prevention and management), asthma management, nutrition, childhood obesity, smoking cessation, women’s health, mental health, and navigating health insurance and the healthcare system. In creating the lessons and activities, my community preceptor and I considered a number of factors limiting the students’ ability to improve their health outcomes such as health literacy levels, limited financial resources, and food access. By applying concepts of the transtheoretical model of behavior change, motivational interviewing, and preventive planning, I was able to help my students overcome personal barriers to improving their health and the health of their families.

Respiratory Care

Students leading an activity on proper asthma care and handing out resources and tools for the class to take home to their families.

Special Activities & Highlights

- Reached out to the UTHSCSA School of Respiratory Care to have fellow students come in and educate the class on best practices in managing asthma in children
- Had the class fill out a daily activity log so that they could find time for exercise in their busy schedules

Health Education Program for Adults Facing Homelessness

This ten-week health education course at the San Antonio Metropolitan Ministries (SAMM) Transitional Living and Learning Center (TLLC) was aimed at identifying health barriers and educating the adults in the SAMM ‘Life Skills’ program on various health-related issues. Under the guidance of my community preceptor and with the help of a team of medical students, I created lessons and worksheets that were compiled into a ‘health journal’ for students to follow along with during class and to refer back to as a resource. The first week was set aside for goal setting and identifying personal barriers to achieving better health outcomes. To measure the efficacy of the program, I conducted surveys at the beginning and end of the course to assess students’ barriers and changes in their health behaviors. The improvements that will be made for future classes based off of the survey outcomes will further the program’s impact on empowering the adults at SAMM to improve their health and well-being.

Be prepared to…

... learn the most from your students about health barriers in the community. They will tell you about the everyday challenges that they face that are often hard to imagine unless you try to imagine yourself in their circumstances.

(1) Entrance to the SAMM Transitional Living and Learning Center (TLLC) where classes were held and (2) SAMM logo from https://www.samm.org

Fall 2015 • Jessica Liu • San Antonio Metropolitan Ministries • Piloting a Health Education Program
Community Assessment of Horizon City, TX

By: Courtney Miller

The community assessment of Horizon City, Texas and the neighboring community of Sparks, Texas served as a valuable project to become familiar with the local community, their needs and resources, in an effort to understand barriers they face to accessing healthy foods, healthcare, physical activities and other community resources. Throughout the time spent in Horizon City, we met local community leaders and members to better understand some of the struggles they face on a daily basis. In addition, this project was conducted in conjunction with Texas Tech University Paul L. Foster School of Medicine and was an integral process in learning about the local communities, people and culture that the medical school and local medical center serves.

Public Health Significance

This community assessment utilized two primary services of public health: (1) Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community and (2) evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services.

After thoroughly conducting a community assessment of Horizon City and Sparks, Texas we were able to better understand the need for greater programs to meet the public health needs of the community. In addition, we identified many disparities present between these two communities that are separated by less than 4 miles.

It was the strong need for access to reliable healthcare within the Sparks community which sparked the effort to open a locally run medical student clinic to better serve the community. In doing so Texas Tech University Paul L. Foster School of Medicine has been better able to assist the community and improve health access and outcomes.

Special events/duties during your practicum

- Horizon City and Sparks are separated by less than 4 miles, yet access to fresh food and produce is much more limited in Sparks (as seen in the image to the right)
- Many neighborhoods in the community lack safe sidewalks and lighting, which does not promote healthy outdoor activities
- Horizon City parks and resources are often accessed by both communities

Lessons Learned

- Evaluating and understanding barriers to healthcare, healthy food and community resources while accounting for local cultural needs is essential in providing tailored community programs and access to essential resources.

Top: Picture of one of three parks. Bottom: local Wal-Mart under construction. Source: self
To address why this might be the case, myself and another medical student designed, planned, and conducted a research project that sought to evaluate education about HPV and the HPV vaccine among the allied health professions, as well as observing the clinical implications of HPV infection.

**Our Project Shows That Knowledge About the HPV Vaccine is Inadequate**

- Only 60% of students at UT health understood that different strains of HPV cause cervical cancer and genital warts.
- Medical students slightly outperformed nursing and public health, but were still unprepared to answer questions about the vaccine overall.

**More Research is Needed**

In order to address exactly why and how educating allied health professionals can help boost vaccination rates, new curriculum focusing on how to advocate for vaccination must introduced, and the populations treated by these physicians, nurses, and public health experts must be monitored for improvements in immunization status.

HPV vaccination rates in Texas lag far behind recommended levels. Nationwide, rates are at only 32% compared to 75%+ for all other developed nations. Reproduced from “HPV Fact Sheet”, The University of Texas Health Science Center Houston, The University of Texas School of Public Health.

**HPV Vaccination Is A Major Issue**

Each year, HPV is implicated in more types of cancer and illness, all preventable by a safe and cost effective vaccine.

Of the public health services identified by the CDC, nearly all can play a role in bolstering vaccination rates, but none more so than healthcare professionals themselves. The use of the vaccine must be advocated for, and by those in a position to effect change and provide the treatment. But this cannot be done unless healthcare workers are taught how the vaccine works and why it is important.

By properly educating doctors, nurses, and public health professionals about HPV and the vaccine, we can prevent many of these terrible illnesses and eradicate HPV-related disease.

**Immunization Rates in the U.S. Lag Behind World**

By Timothy Overton

With each passing year, researchers are discovering more and more ill health effects of the human papilloma virus (HPV), with many common cancers linked to the infection. Even more worrisome is how widespread the disease is, with most experts explaining that the majority of sexually active adults, have, had, or will contract HPV at some point in their life.

The good news is that effective vaccines are available. The bad news is that they are widely underutilized, with the United States having a lower vaccination that nearly all other developing countries.

To address why this might be the case, myself and another medical student designed, planned, and conducted a research project that sought to evaluate education about HPV and the HPV vaccine among the allied health professions, as well as observing the clinical implications of HPV infection.

HPV is a major causer of cancer for both males and females, and is easily prevented with the vaccine. Source: https://www.grouphealthresearch.org/live-healthy/all-articles/live-healthy-2015/hpv-vaccine-cancer-prevention-girls-and-boys/
Clint Community Assessment

Assessing the factors that influence health issues in Clint, TX

By: Laura Palmer

Our group visited Clint, a community in El Paso in order to better understand the health issues and needs of the population. The school set up appointments with different community members and organizations, and we met with them to hear their perspective on health care concerns and community resources. After this, each group made a PowerPoint presentation and taught the rest of the class about the community they visited.

We learned that the drought affects all aspects of the citizens’ lives, and that there is a significant need for more child care. In addition, the church offers the only licensed counselor in the area, therefore a counseling center for troubled youth would be beneficial. Clint also has a need for medical facilities, as the nearest hospital is 25 minutes away and the only healthcare clinic in Clint is a dentist’s office. Furthermore, about half the population is uninsured and undocumented.

Public Health Significance

The Community Assessment most closely fits with the second Essential Public Health Service—“Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community”.

During the community assessment, our group got to explore Clint, interact with community members, interview professionals that served the area ranging from clergy to community center managers to border patrol officers, and truly get a feel for the every day needs of the population. We got to see first hand the assets and weaknesses of the community that play into the citizens’ general well-being and healthcare needs.

For example, in Clint, ambulances wait around in the community in case of an emergency, and the Templo Centro de Fe have free clinic days at least once a year that undocumented people take advantage of to seek medical attention. In addition, border patrol officers educate children on drug use and weapon safety, and the city leases Puddleduck Park for $1 a year from the railroad to children have a safe place to play.

Unfortunately, recent droughts have rendered much of the farmland unusable in the city, and there is a significant divide between middle class and low-income housing. In fact, 20% of the Clint population is below the poverty line.

Advice for Future Practicum Students

• Divide and conquer to hit all of the assigned community locations
• Have at least 1 Spanish speaking student in each group, many community members speak Spanish only
• Take pictures of community assets and weaknesses!

Practicum Highlights

• Enlightening and personal perspective on community issues and potential healthcare needs
• Fosters student-community contacts and engagement

Clint, Texas

https://maps.google.com/

Practicum Highlights

Clint Community Center, a community asset providing resources, fellowship, and entertainment

Photos courtesy of Laura Palmer

Caption describing picture
Photos courtesy of Laura Palmer

https://maps.google.com/
During the Summer of 2013, I was tasked with assessing Northeast El Paso for a variety of public health parameters including access to quality food, social services, medical services, and outdoor amenities. The purpose of the project was to better understand the community in which I would train for the next four years, as well as to develop skills for surveying any community. The methodology was simple; assess the neighborhood visually by exploring it in person while interviewing community leaders at relevant institutions for their perspectives. This was accomplished over the course of several weeks via car and conversation. Findings were compiled into a presentation designed to elucidate an unfamiliar audience with important obstacles faced by said community, as well as resources at their disposal.

Public Health Significance

This project employed many of the 10 Essential Services of Public Health described by the CDC. The two most relevant services have been outlined below:

1) Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community.

This is the best overall description of this project. Interviews with administrators at important institutions including a local high school, police department, homeless shelter, and park provided well-rounded insight into important barriers to health pertinent their community. Though this data was subjective, it was informed by extensive firsthand experience that quickly identified specific concerns. Importantly, it established relationships with community leaders and potential agents of change. Statistics and objective observations supplemented these findings.

2) Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues.

This was best embodied by the project’s culminating presentation to classmates and faculty. The presentation was a careful distillation of important issues affecting Northeast El Paso, as well as a prompt for conversation about potential solutions. Similar prompts could be found throughout the interview process as well.

Project Highlight:

The best part of the experience was presenting the finished project. Collecting my findings and organizing them in a constructive format engaged both my ability to problem solve as well as communicate effectively.

Lesson Learned:

Choose a project that takes you outside of your comfort zone. Northeast El Paso has a history of violence and crime that led some to refer to it as “The Devil’s Triangle.” Intimidating as it may be, this designation highlights a need for attention.
Teen Pregnancy Prevention: An 1115 Medicaid Waiver Approach  
By Olivia Thornton

In 2013, over 2,500 females ages 10 to 19 gave birth in Bexar County. Over 500 of these teen mothers already had at least one child. Teen childbearing in Bexar County during 2013 was estimated to cost $58 million. The Bexar County teen birth rate for females ages 15 to 19 was 51% higher than the national rate in 2013. To decrease these high rates of teen births, the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District's Project WORTH program expanded prevention education and initiated new services for adolescents through federal 1115 Medicaid Waiver funding. Initiatives include case management for teen mothers, evidence-based prevention education for teens, providing long acting reversible contraceptives (LARC) for female teens, and provider education on the Adolescent Medical Home (AMH) model.

Public Health Significance

Project WORTH informs, educates, and empowers teens to take control of their reproductive health and focus on their hopes and dreams while putting motherhood on hold. The provider education aspect of the project helped build a competent public and personal health care workforce by increasing awareness about common teen health concerns and teen-friendly practices.

My project, which involved clinic observation and patient counseling, helped to link teens to needed personal health services such as access to LARCs and information about reproductive health. The data analysis portion of my project involved evaluating the effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of the services that Project WORTH offered.

Highlights

Dr. Junda Woo is an absolute inspiration to work with. She is a wonderful, dedicated advocate and a champion for her patients. She is a great role model for future physicians like myself.

Working with teenage girls is difficult sometimes, but I was always incredible impressed by how independent and smart our patient were at Teen Clinic.

Pearl of Wisdom

Don't underestimate teenagers and their ability to make informed decisions regarding their reproductive health. Also, working for the city involved a lot of mandatory trainings and certifications. Don't blow them off; learn from them.
Society, Community, and the Individual

Practicum Highlights

- Windshield Study of the Montana Vista neighborhood in far East El Paso, TX
- Learning about basic public health principles and the ways that they directly apply to the practice of medicine
- Taking medical Spanish classes which aid in communicating to patients in a culturally competent way

Advice for Future MD/MPH Practicum Students at TTUHSC-El Paso Paul L. Foster School of Medicine

- Sign up for practicum immediately after completing the SCI course, as the two are inherently linked activities and classes.

Preparing Physicians for the Care of Underserved Communities: A Public Health Class for Medical Students
By: Meredith Trubitt

Society, Community, and the Individual is a unique class of which all medical students at Texas Tech University Health Science Center-El Paso must participate. The class is designed to teach students about basic public health principles to prepare them for a deeper understanding of the patient populations they will be exposed to in the future, specifically there is an emphasis on health disparities.

Our first project is completing a windshield survey of a Colonia in El Paso. My group was assigned to Montana Vista, a community which had been around for a few years, but was still lacking many essentials for a functional community, including safety from stray pets, no sidewalks, lack of lighting in neighborhoods.

While a simple assessment, it is necessary for the physician to understand these disparities as they directly influence the ability for the physician to make appropriate recommendations to the patient. For example, it is worthless for a physician to tell a patient to exercise if there is nowhere for the patient to exercise. In our case, the patients had no sidewalks or well-lit streets to be able to even walk. It would have been better to suggest that the patient take the bus part way to work and walk another part, or to exercise in the comforts of their own home.

Understanding these barriers allows us a more holistic treatment of our patients, and is a necessary component to the success of patient care.

Public Health Significance

The components of the Windshield Survey most closely correlate to the early aspects of the Essential Public Health Services: monitoring health status to identify community problems, diagnosing and investigating health problems, and informing, educating, and empowering people about health issues.

Our project provides data for others to use to develop local interventions or policies for the community. TTUHSC-El Paso works closely with the Department of Public Health and the School of Public Health to provide physicians the necessary tools to work within the public health arena.
San Elizario Community Assessment

A windshield and walking survey of an El Paso community

By: Loryn Wilson

As part of my “summer immersion” at the beginning of medical school in El Paso during July of 2013, I worked with a team of students to assess the needs and resources of San Elizario. The community is on the outskirts of town – outside the city limits of El Paso – and has a significant degree of poverty. We first conducted a windshield survey and estimated what we imagined to be the needs of the community. We then talked with healthcare providers, community leaders, and school administrators about their perspective. We focused on issues of health equity and social problems hindering health. The final product included a summary and recommendations to build a healthy community.

San Eli highlights

- Licon Dairy and Petting Zoo provides local jobs as well as entertainment and delicious treats for visitors
- San Elizario Presidio Chapel is part of the historic Mission Trail

Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Allow time for the unexpected and be flexible. We had a rigid schedule to adhere to but ended up sidetracked for a few hours when an elderly community member became ill in the extreme July heat.

Public Health Significance

This project most related to the essential public health service of mobilizing community partnerships and action to identify and solve health problems. During our meetings we learned about how poverty, violence across the border in Juarez, and cycles of addiction and abuse affected member of the community as well as how healthcare providers were working to provide medical and dental care. We learned of resources such as food banks, women’s shelters, and clinics that were being underutilized. Our final recommendations included suggestions such as advertising such resources at schools and community gatherings.
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/