Public Health Practice

Assessment

Policy Development

Assurance

UTHealth School of Public Health Practicum Experiences Fall 2015 - Regional Campuses
The practicum experience is an integral part of the MPH and DrPH curricula. Public health students are provided with the opportunity to apply their classroom knowledge to real world settings through which they make a meaningful contribution to a public health organization.

Under the guidance of a community preceptor and faculty sponsor, students 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

## Regional Campuses

*Number of Students: 19*

## Austin

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<td>Improving Health Care for Older Adults</td>
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<td>Health Policy, Disaster Management, and Regionalization</td>
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<td>County Health Funding</td>
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<td>Total Worker Health</td>
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<td>HIV/AIDS Stigma Survey</td>
<td>Camille Spears</td>
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Faith-Based CATCH program

By: Alexandra Haas

Providing health curriculum for youth in the context of church youth group programs

CATCH the Spirit was developed by a University of Texas Health Science Center public health student as an adaptation of CATCH designed to combine spiritual growth and scripture with physical activity and nutrition curriculum in a youth group setting. Skyview Baptist elected to conduct a trial run of the program with the children in their youth group in order to evaluate the feasibility and value of the program. In order to assess and fit the needs of Skyview Baptist, CBPR-based meetings were conducted to determine what the ministry sought to gain through the program. The six program lessons were adapted to fit the time-frame and goals of the youth leader before the lessons were delivered to the youth.

Qualitative interviews were conducted with the children and youth leader upon the completion of the program. The response to the program adaptation was overwhelmingly positive.

Healthy Snacks Win Hearts

- The provision of healthy snacks for each lesson was an addition determined through early CBPR meetings that the youth found to be very important to their overall experience of the program.

The Importance of CBPR

Before implementing an intervention, it is essential to meet with stakeholders and collaboratively discuss their needs and desires. Working together to create a tailored product has the benefits of being both more readily accepted and more effective.

Public Health Significance

The obesity epidemic is one that must be tackled from all angles of society. CATCH has been a successful way for health messages to reach children through their schools in order to promote healthy choices. In order to bolster this effort, faith-based organizations can be another source of health information for youth.

This particular practicum experience was designed to inform, empower and educate individuals about the health issue of obesity. Through connecting the topics of nutrition, physical activity, sleep hygiene and screen time to scripture-based lessons, the youth group was able to tackle spiritual, physical and mental health together.

The entire program was framed using 1 Corinthians 3:16-3:17: “Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple...” Under this frame, youth took a look at their habits through a spiritual lens. Additional scripture was introduced each week that reinforced the lessons, some of which was added by the youth leader to bolster the spiritual content.

By the program’s completion, qualitative interviews revealed changes in fast food consumption, fruit and vegetable intake and exercise habits.

Involve the target population as equal members of the decision-making team. They have valuable experience and expertise that will tailor and enhance the effectiveness of one-size-fits-all interventions.
Increasing Health Coverage

Providing health coverage assistance and enrollment in La Plata County, CO

By: Libby Hobbs

As my practicum, I worked with an organization called the La Plata Family Centers Coalition (LPFCC), a family advocacy organization in Durango, CO. My role as an Enrollment Specialist was to outreach to and enroll La Plata County residents in affordable health coverage, specifically Medicaid and CHP+.

The position is funded through a grant from the Colorado Health Foundation that aims to get health insurance coverage for those without it in Colorado. LPFCC’s outreach focuses on finding the pockets of the county that are most likely to be uninsured.

Public Health Significance

The Family Health and Development team at The La Plata Family Centers Coalition works within all ten of the essential public health services. The Enrollment Specialists are mostly focused on two of those services: inform, educate and empower people about health issues, and link people to the person health services and assure provisions of healthcare when otherwise unavailable.

LPFCC works to inform, educate and empower people about health issues, by helping them through the application process, explaining their options, and providing them with the resources to advocate for themselves and receive the services they are eligible for. LPFCC is able to create a community in which individuals can advocate for themselves, and help others find the resources they need.

LPFCC also links people to the person health services and assure provisions of healthcare when otherwise unavailable. By enrolling clients in affordable healthcare, they can be linked to providers in the area who accept their coverage. When necessary Enrollment Specialists can call providers with a client to make an appointment. LPFCC also advocates for and helps clients who are ineligible for federal programs by finding them providers with a sliding fee scale or by finding an organization who is able to help them pay for past emergency services.

Special events/ duties/ highlights during your practicum

- Collaboration with other La Plata County organizations for a common goal
- Feedback from clients about how difficult the application was and how much easier our assistance made it.

Lessons Learned [OR] Advice for Future Practicum Students

Providing services to a community must be a collaborative effort. There must be support for that work and a common goal of making it happen.
Public Health Significance

OAC therapies are important for the management of cardiovascular diseases for which prevention of thrombosis (clotting) is necessary. The most commonly prescribed OAC is warfarin. Successful anticoagulation requires maintaining for the patient a consistent therapeutic level of the drug as high levels can lead to bleeding and low levels can lead to clotting. Yet, warfarin dosing is highly variable as it may be affected by several common risk factors such as diet, concomitant medications, smoking, and genetic polymorphisms. Another concern with warfarin is a clinician’s ability to reverse its effect upon trauma as it is long-acting and difficult to reverse. Several novel oral anticoagulant (NOAC) therapies recently FDA approved use a different principle to inhibit thrombin formation. These NOACs are easier to reverse, shorter acting, and have proven easier to maintain therapeutic levels for patients. However, there is limited long-term outcome information available for these NOACs to assist clinicians in choosing the best OAC therapy for their patients. With the availability of these new therapies, it is important to evaluate and understand the effectiveness of these compared with the current standard of care to ensure future use of best practices that provide the best outcomes for individuals as well and for society.

Evaluating Outcomes for Oral Anticoagulant Therapies

By: Christie Hughes, MT(ASCP)

This practicum involved applying epidemiologic techniques using clinical datasets and medical record information to develop data collection tools and procedures. The project aimed to abstract information from patients taking oral anticoagulant (OAC) therapy treated for bleeds or clots through the Seton hospital network over the last few years. This data will be used to identify common outcomes of patients on routine OAC therapy and to determine whether particular classes of OAC therapies are associated more with bleeding or clotting outcomes. The project required interacting with an emergency medicine physician, clinical researcher, medical students, and research coordinators within a large hospital network. Tasks included determining the appropriate data to collect based on the protocol requirements and available hospital system information, developing surveys for data abstractors to collect these data, generating a data abstraction procedure, and training the abstractors.

Practicum Highlights

- Determined data elements to collect based on protocol requirements
- Developed surveys for data abstractors
- Generated survey procedure
- Worked within a hospital setting
- Interacted with a physician, clinical researcher, research coordinators, and medical

Advice for Researchers

- When translating desired data elements from a protocol into tactical tools (e.g. survey), it is important to understand the audience and to anticipate necessary data elements that will support later analyses.
- Plan the design of surveys and protocols such that data can be collected, analyzed, and reported in a manner that not only tells the desired story, but that speaks to the audience such that the results motivate the audience to take action.


Practicum Highlights

- Doing community surveillance after identifying where domestic violence occurs the most.
- Being able to utilize my academic skills learned from the classroom and apply it to tools needed for the community.
- Networking and meeting people who are already involved with domestic violence prevention in the city of Austin.

Lessons Learned

One thing that I learned from this practicum experience is that public health problems can be seen anywhere in a variety of shapes and forms. I didn’t expect to find such a high significance in identifying against assault cases in the different communities within the city I live in, but once I was able to really delve into it, the public health significance was so apparent and real. This naturally transformed how I view every nook and cranny of the city as well as the paradigm that I hold when thinking about Austin as a city.

Preventing Domestic Violence in Austin, TX.
By: Dee Jung

Physical assault accounts for the top third reason for trauma in the city of Austin, proceeded by motor/vehicle accidents and falls. Trauma is related to many different developmental processes and usually has a negative impact on the victim, regardless of age and status. With this being said, it is of importance to prevent further incidences of any injuries that relate to trauma.

To address this issue, the Trauma services department within the UMC Brackenridge hospital wanted to see who this violence was happening to, where it was occurring, and how they could help to prevent further victims from entering the hospital. Due to its characteristic as a pilot project, my main duties were to identify a high risk community, perform a community surveillance, identify what the community needs in order to prevent violence, and meet with various organizations to see how the hospital can serve and help for further prevention programs.

Public Health Significance

My practicum experience was related to the following PHES:

- Monitor physical assault status to identity and solve community health problems.
- Diagnose and investigate health problems and hazards in the community.
- Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues
- Mobilize community partnerships and action.

Specific examples on how my practicum experience was related to these PHES is as follows:

- Reported cases regarding physical assault in 2014 has been noted and mapped for Austin, TX.
- Communities with the highest cases of assaults were selected and surveyed
- Intervention and awareness programs were accumulated to see what worked in the past.
- Networking with organizations that deals with domestic violence were contacted and met with.
Nutritional Environment Assessment in Restaurants

**Practicum Highlights**

- The Tool helps the communities to assess restaurant nutrition and identify opportunities to intervene.
- Promoting food outlets with healthy nutrition environment could help in prevention of chronic diseases like obesity, diabetes etc.

**Lessons Learned**

**Advice for Future Practicum Students**

- Real world practical experiences may differ from similar classroom exercises. You might feel more responsible on your part.

**Public Health Significance**

Texas DSHS is helping the communities to diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community. With the help of TxNEA-R tool communities can identify unhealthy practices in prepared food outlets.

By promoting the TxNEA-R tool, the DSHS is reaching out to the community stakeholders, thus able to mobilize community partnerships to identify and solve health problems here to tackle unhealthy nutritional environment in prepared food outlets.

The TxNEA-R tool is developed by Dept. of State Health Services (DSHS) to assist the local communities in assessing nutritional environment in prepared food outlets.

I was involved in editing and finalizing the Manual of Procedures and the forms that guide the community coordinators and field staff to implement the assessment.

I helped in developing a logic model that guides the communities to plan, evaluate and implement the nutritional environment assessment in local restaurants.

I was involved in assisting to develop practice recommendations for restaurant-based environmental, policy, and pricing interventions.

The TxNEA-R tool, the Manual, the Trainings are available at http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/TXNEAR/
Public Health Significance

The 10 Essential Public health Services describe public health activities that public health officials should engage in and is used as a framework.

One of these services that my project at the HHSD focused on was monitoring health status to identify and solve community health problems. By filling out the foodborne illness complaints from people, we can identify any outbreaks and find the source.

Another one is diagnosing and investigating health problems and health hazards in the community.

After interviewing the people that might have gotten ill from a restaurant, a sanitarian is sent out to inspect that suspect restaurant. If more reports about a certain restaurant or pathogen arises, then a deeper investigation will occur. This helps to keep the community safe and prevent further infection.

Foodborne illness Outbreaks

By: Jessica Romano

My practicum was in the Epidemiology and Health Statistics Unit at the Austin HHSD where I worked with Heather Cooks-Sinclair and Laura Fox focusing on foodborne illness outbreaks in the city of Austin.

My main role this semester was to create a database for the hard copy complaint and inspection forms from 2015 and then identify any clusters of restaurants in the food history portion of the form using ArcGIS.

Epi Info 7 was used to create the database for the forms and then a report was generated on the frequencies and patterns in the forms using the Visual Dashboard in Epi Info 7. ArcGIS was used to map out the findings and identify hot spot areas (restaurants) in Austin.

I will be presenting the results at the city of Austin HHSD meeting in December.

Foodborne illnesses contracted from Austin Restaurants

Figure 1. One of the experiences I had at the HHSD was following a sanitarian on a couple foodborne illness complaint inspections at restaurants.


Practicum Highlights

- Creating a database using Epi Info for the Austin HHSD to use for foodborne illness complaint and restaurant inspection forms.
- Gaining experience in analysis techniques in ArcGIS.
- Being in a city department and learning the process of surveillance and reporting notifiable diseases.

Advice for Future Students

- Always ask questions and try not to get frustrated if you don’t understand something right away. This is supposed to be a learning experience.

Public Health Significance

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Figure 2. Sliced tomatoes in restaurants are one of the most common sources of foodborne illnesses.

As a secondary project, I also helped organize a street team to promote the Choose Healthier App.

My final products include the Mayor’s Health and Fitness Council Tool kit, a letter to reviewers, and an information sheet for prospective street team members.

Conferences and Events attended during my Practicum

- Growing Healthy Texas 2015, San Antonio
- PATH Conference on Social Inequality and Health, Austin

Advice for Future Practicum Students

My advice to future practicum students is to really make the most of your 12 hours per week. If you are not being challenged, ask for more! If you do not have enough direction on an assignment, ask your supervisor. Always speak up. Try to sharpen and develop skills that will help you get a job and do that job well after graduation.
Unexplained Kidney Disease In Nicaragua

Investigation into the Etiology of an Outbreak of Unexplained Kidney Disease in Nicaraguan Sugarcane Workers

By: Linda Garcia

My practicum was at the Texas Children Hospital, Feigin Center with the department of Tropical Medicine from Baylor College of Medicine. I worked under the supervision of Dr. Kristy Murray, DVM, PhD.

The study was based on Nicaragua sugar cane workers and the increased rate of acute cases unexplained kidney disease. The approach used for the study was in two parts: getting retrospective paper chart reviews, and collecting and testing different types of samples. Human and animal samples of serum and urine were collected to be tested for diseases or abnormalities. Water and soil samples from the field and home were collected to test for diseases or contaminants.

My responsibilities included data gathering from chart reviews in the field, translating from a foreign language, and helping the veterinarian students collect samples and set rat traps, data entry, creating an electronic form in Epi Info 7 for the chart reviews and creating preliminary analysis of data that has been entered. The study is still ongoing so the data is not finalized, and will be subject to change as new information collected.

80% of the male sugar cane workers are presented with a febrile illness. Previously acquired research skills were incorporated to evaluate and perform data analysis. The study is currently in the works of determining the prevalence of antibodies indicative of acute infection to Hanta virus or Leptospirosis in ill cases versus age and occupation-matched negative controls.

Special events/ duties during your practicum

- I had an opportunity to go to Nicaragua and experience field epidemiology.
- Worked with many different doctors and people in different countries.

Lessons Learned/ Advice for Future Students

- The practicum gave hands on experience of what we have been learning in class.
- Knowing the local language of the area of study helps smooth out any questions that arise between the researcher and the host country.

Nicaraguan veterinarian students collecting sample from the patients' animals. Source: Linda Garcia

Going out to the community to collect samples. Source: Linda Garcia

Public Health Significance

Applying professional communication skills in order to interact with a primary language, other than English in a foreign country was a crucial part in the study. Proper communication was required to have completed consent forms and to gather proper data without room for misinterpretation. Public health significance was analyzing medical forms and records, which were then subsequently translated into English for further record keeping and analysis. The medical records were then reviewed to determine if more than
Practicum Highlights

- Develop critical online MCH training materials
- Make an exponential difference in the MCH community
- Impact MCH practitioners throughout the US
- Be part of the online program beta test and launch
- Flexible work schedule
- Freedom to work independently
- Access to MCH thought leaders throughout UTSPH

Advice for Future Practicum Students

This practicum is unique because your work will impact practitioners across the country, exponentially touching many lives. In this way, it greatly exceeds the one-for-one output to impact many practicums offer.

MCH Education Critical for Practitioners in Remote Areas

By: Emily Beachy

The purpose of the UTSPH/GVSU Multimodal Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Training Program is to strengthen the public health workforce to meet the diverse needs of Title V populations via online MCH public health training.

My duties were to create two complete online modules of training material for health practitioners. This included sourcing and creating content, developing lesson plans, and creating pre and post test. Latawnya Peachy, MPH, Dr. Borst (GVSU), and Dr. Caughy (UTSPH) give one-on-one guidance and feedback on all module development.

All modules will be completed in the spring of 2016 and will be beta tested by the Houston Head Start Program.

Public Health Significance

This practicum addresses many of the 10 Essential Public Health Services. Below a few are detailed.

Our work will further MCH understanding and practices throughout the US.

In the spring of 2016 you will work with community members to beta test the modules. We have been surveying and working with community members throughout HRSA 6 areas this semester.

The trainings we create will increase the competency of the public health workforce.

This practicum is great for people who want to initiate innovative training ideas. The team is very open to suggestion. It is great for self-starters!
Weight Loss and Disabilities

**Practicum Highlights**

- Intervention delivery via conference calls and in-person sessions
- Collecting and reviewing meal trackers and physical activity logs
- Sending feedback to participants on their nutrition and physical activity
- Weighing participants and collecting data

**Advice for Future Practicum Students**

- Complete your practicum in a topic you are interested in or want to learn more about
- Give yourself plenty of time to complete all of your hours so you can enjoy the experience

**“Group Lifestyle Balance: Adapted for Impaired Mobility (GLB/AIM)” Weight Loss Program**

**By: Danielle Carlton**

The public health issue I worked on was weight loss among people who have mobility impairments using a program called GLB/AIM. The UT School of Public Health Dallas campus is where the program is being implemented and delivered. Recruitment occurred within the community and at the Baylor Institute for Rehabilitation. GLB/AIM was adapted from the University of Pittsburgh’s original GLB program and Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP).

**Public Health Significance**

My practicum experience related to two of the ten Public Health Essential Services (PHES). The first is to inform, educate, and empower people about health issues. This is being done in GLB/AIM through program delivery and implementation. Participants learn about weight loss, nutrition, physical activity and other health behaviors while in the program. The second PHES is to research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems. Since this is an area of limited research, GLB/AIM will help us better understand weight loss in this population.

I helped select the study design, collect data, create databases and clean data, randomize participants, deliver the program intervention, interact with participants, and conduct descriptive statistics. The final product is an analysis of attendance and the level of engagement of participants in the program. Data on phone conversations, text messages, e-mails, session attendance, make up sessions and meal trackers were analyzed.

More information is required in order to meet the needs of people with disabilities and help them lose weight effectively. GLB/AIM will encourage future weight loss initiatives for people with disabilities. What we learn from the data collected will improve the outcome for those who participate in future programs. We hope to learn more about their barriers to weight loss and ways to improve their success at losing weight. Being an institution of public health education and research, the UTSPH also maintains these PHES.
Effectiveness of CHWs in the ED

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Community Health Workers in the Emergency Department

By: Catherine Dunlop

My primary project with the Injury Prevention department at Children’s Medical Center in Dallas was to evaluate their Community Health Worker program. The program works out of the “Fast Track” Emergency Department where low-acuity patients are seen.

Part of the target population for the program includes those who do not have a PCP for their child, or those who are unhappy with their child’s PCP. This evaluation used an initial Needs Assessment and a follow-up Change Assessment to determine the efficacy of the program in helping people change their child’s PCP.

Out of 1632 patients seen in the ED between June and October the CHWs performed 62 Needs Assessments and 23 follow-up Change Assessment calls were made.

With a low response rate one of the conclusions being considered is that our target population for the CHW intervention is perhaps slightly different than imagined.

Public Health Significance

Evaluating the Community Health Worker program in the Children’s Medical Center falls under many of the essential services of public health.

Community Health Workers themselves provide an essential link between patients and services provided. The CHWs in the Emergency Department work with patients to ensure they have access to a PCP, health insurance, and any other resources they may find useful.

Through this evaluation the competency of the CHWs as well as the effectiveness of the health service they provide were assessed.

Ultimately, the results of the evaluation indicated primarily that a more comprehensive evaluation needs to be performed; one that measures more outcomes of the CHW intervention.

This original evaluation focused specifically on whether someone who did not have a PCP for their child or who were unhappy with their child’s PCP. However, a low response during the evaluation indicated that the assumption that the majority of the patients seen during CHW evaluations had issues with their child’s PCP was incorrect.

Determining the population of people seen by the CHWs during their interventions would help guide a more comprehensive evaluation that helps to assess many of the different aspects of the CHW intervention, including other outcomes and different resources given to parents. This way the evaluation can become more effective.

Special events

- Presenting data on drowning during a Drowning Prevention Roundtable
- Volunteering at multiple car seat events with Safe Kids Greater Dallas, giving parents new car seats

Advice for Future Practicum Students

Research is a slow-moving process. A semester is too short a time to design and finish a whole research project. Try to get on board with helping finish projects designed by other people, or designing projects of which you will not see the outcome or impact. Instead of being frustrated by the pace, hold onto the experience you are gaining and think about how you would design your own research in the future.
Feasibility of a food allergy educational intervention to train school personnel in Houston Independent School District (HISD)

By: Ritu Gupta

- My practicum was in the Dept. of Allergy and Immunology at Texas Children’s Hospital, where I focused on food allergies in children in the Houston Independent School District.
- I was involved in the Allergy Ready CARE Course. As part of my duties, I assisted in data collection and analysis, results part of the manuscript and the poster showcased at the ‘Baylor Showcase of Educational Scholarship.’
- We implemented online and campus based food allergy education for all school staff personnel.
- The final product created was the Food Allergy Ready Course poster which indicated that mandatory online food allergy and anaphylaxis education improved school staff online course completion (more than tripled).

Public Health Significance

- Food allergies among children are highly prevalent in the US. 6 million US children, 2 per class.
- The Food Allergy Ready Care Course is based on the public health service- ‘Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues’, since we implemented food allergy education online and in-person to all school staff members.
- New Texas laws provide for undesignated epinephrine at school which necessitates accessible online educational intervention for anaphylaxis. Online training has previously been shown to increase knowledge and preparedness for anaphylaxis, so our study explored the utility of the Allergy Ready: CARE Course, an online food allergy and anaphylaxis educational intervention to train HISD staff.

Highlights during your practicum

- I have incorporated the principles of ethics (protection of patients, informed consent, autonomy, confidentiality, protection and welfare of communities, safety and security of the patients) and teamwork in my personal and professional life.
- I was able to come up with different questions that the data could help us answer, for example, the time spend on the test could help understand the correlation between the time taken on the test and the scores on the tests.
- It was an enriching experience to interact with the nurses who came from different backgrounds and ethnicities, I learned to respect and understand everyone’s opinions.

Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Make sure that all the data required for the study has been collected well in time, else it is difficult to go on with the project deadlines!

### Nurse Survey Results

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p-value: Control v Target 2014-2015 0.0010 0.9911

The nurse survey results (pre and post-test scores) of the academic years 2013-2014 and 2014-2015.

Source: Atoosa Kourosh, Chinelo Nsobundu, Ritu Gupta, Charles G Minard, Danielle Guffey, Carla M Davis. Feasibility of a Food Allergy Online Educational Intervention to Train School Personnel in Houston Independent School District (HISD). Texas Children's Hospital and Baylor College of Medicine Division of Pediatric Immunology Allergy & Rheumatology; UT School of Public Health, Baylor College of Medicine Institute for Clinical and Translational Research.
Childhood nutrition and fitness

Introducing a CATCH program to Ecuador

By: Mary Gerardo

Over the course of three months, I assisted CEDEI and CATCH Global with the implementation of a CATCH pilot in Cuenca, Ecuador. We partnered with ministries, organizations, practitioners, and schools to incorporate nutrition and physical activity lessons within seven schools to educate students on healthy living.

Prior to execution, the teachers and principals underwent one to two days of CATCH training. Surveys were also conducted for comparison at the completion of the pilot.

My role mainly focused on observations, coordination, and assessments during the program. I collected data and delivered it to CEDEI, CATCH, and their main partner, the Ministerio de Educacion. This data will be used as we decide what the next phase will be. It is our hope that the project will expand to more schools. The pilot will be complete at the end of December.

Public Health Significance

During this pilot program, the education and health ministries, various organizations and agencies, health practitioners and seven schools joined together to bring change to Ecuador. With overweight and obesity increasing in Ecuador, the team collaborated to identify approaches for addressing the public health issues.

CEDEI proceeded to create a project that would create a learning environment for children of the 6th grade. The aim was for the students to become informed about general nutrition and physical activity.

After the implementation, the community partners met on a regular basis to discuss the project’s progress, address challenges, and determine strategies for future phases.

This project focused on the Essential Public Health Services of: mobilizing community partnerships and action and informing, educating, and empowering people about health issues.

Highlights

- Leading the implementation of CATCH without knowing the country or being 100% fluent in Spanish
- Finding creative solutions to problems that prevented progression within certain schools

Lessons Learned

- Sometimes your best teacher is yourself.
- In a new environment and unfamiliar situation, it takes going through the motions and trying various approaches to teach yourself what works and what doesn’t.


Improving Community and Occupational Health

Practicum Highlights

- Coordinated 2015 Healthy Workplace Recognition Program and conducted site visits
- Worked with Student Ambassadors to improve health and wellness in schools

Advice for Future Practicum Students

- Don’t settle for a practicum that doesn’t meet your needs. Reach out to every potential site until you find one that offers what you want.
- Don’t be afraid to let your supervisor know if the work you are doing isn’t what you expected. Most supervisors will work with you to make sure you get the most out of this experience.

Improving Community Health and Wellness in San Antonio

By: Kara Anderson

As an intern for the Mayor’s Fitness Council (MFC), I worked with several committees dedicated to improving the health and fitness of San Antonio residents.

During my practicum, I had the opportunity to work with different populations that had one goal in mind: improving community health. Specifically, I worked with the Healthy Schools committee, where MFC members worked with student ambassadors who proposed and implemented interventions that improved their schools and/or neighborhoods.

I also worked with the San Antonio Business Group on Health (SABGH) to evaluate applicants of the Healthy Workplace Recognition Award Program and to plan a forum where applicants received awards recognizing their efforts to improve employee health. Planning the Healthy Workplace forum allowed me to establish relationships with members of key corporations in the community in order to conduct site visits that helped shed light on factors that impact physical activity and general health among employees.

Aside from general tasks geared toward promoting MFC programs in the community, my main project involved creating a guide to assist MFC and SABGH board members with the workplace program evaluation process during future Healthy Workplace application cycles.

Public Health Significance

MFC programs met several essential public health services through collaboration efforts between all of the committees. The two most closely related services for my practicum are the following:

- Mobilize community partnerships and action to identify and solve health problems.
- Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems.

Alternative workstations installed to reduce sedentary behavior at Humana’s San Antonio office.

Source: Humana Workstations. Personal photographs by Kara Anderson. 18 November 2015
Improving Health Care for Older Adults

Practicum Highlights

- Completed baseline assessment of geriatrics knowledge among internal medicine interns.
- Provided targeted online, case-based geriatrics education to internal medicine residents.

Geriatrics Education for Internal Medicine Residents

By: Denise Flinn

I completed a baseline pre-test assessment of geriatrics knowledge among our first year internal medicine residents.

Using these results, I then directed our residents to online, case-based geriatrics modules to complete during our Medicare Wellness clinics.

Throughout the year and into the Spring, residents will complete additional modules and geriatrics didactics.

I will assess the effectiveness of our new curriculum by asking the residents to complete a post-test assessment at the conclusion of our didactics series in the Spring.

Public Health Significance

Through this effort, I hope to improve the care we provide to older adults in our community-based clinic.

My project addresses the essential public health service of diagnosing and investigating health problems and health hazards in the community, with a goal specifically of identifying and reducing health hazards that threaten the health and independence of our older adult patients.

The Robert B. Green campus serves a vulnerable population of adults in the downtown San Antonio area, providing care to many patients with limited resources and low health literacy.
Public Health Significance

This practicum really has its strength in the public health essential services of policy development and assurance. STRAC is heavily invested in making sure that the regional response to time critical illnesses of stroke, trauma, and myocardial infarction is truly a system of care. In this, they need to bring all the stakeholders (hospitals, EMS, as well as public health) together and STRAC is the advocate for the public in these interactions assuring a competent response. The FSEC typing matrix is one of those examples where they make policy and assure a competent workforce for health care.

Also being a quasi-govermentall agency, and a major player in disaster response in Texas, there were multiple opportunities for me to sit in on high level meetings where health policy was actively being made at the local, regional, and state level. For any student interested in disaster management, this practicum is highly recommended.
Health funding opportunities in BHFSA’s focus area

By: Román Meneses

The Baptist Health Foundation of San Antonio focuses on health improvement grants serving Atascosa, Bandera, Bexar, Comal, Guadalupe, Kendall, Medina and Wilson counties.

To better provide assistance to area non-profits, the current funding and health landscape had to be assessed.

By using data from government and private entities, each county’s socio-demographic, per capita health spending and health rankings were compared and presented to the board of trustees.

It was found that Atascosa County is severely underfunded and ranks lowest in most health variables. Also, mental health, pediatric and geriatric services must be improved across the area.

These findings were considered prior to awarding $6.6 Million in 2015 grants.

Public Health Significance

In my practicum I was able to observe and contribute to the CDC’s essential public health service of “Mobilize community partnerships and action to identify and solve health problems”.

I believe my findings can be used in the short-term future to promote Coalition development in the reproducible problems facing the community.

By combining physical and mental resources, area organizations can make a targeted impact in the current health challenges facing each county.

The Baptist Health Foundation of San Antonio promotes partnerships with area non-profits to fulfill the long-term health goals of the community at large.

By having a dedicated staff, a committed board and a faithful Baptist heritage, many necessary development projects have been funded including: Scholarships to all major Universities in the area, disease-specific research, opportunities for grant matching and sponsoring of community wellness pilot programs.
Total Worker Health

An Integrated Safety and Health Program for the Employee

By: Andrea Navarro

Total Worker Health is the idea that work is a social determinant of illness, so the work organization should focus not only on injury prevention, but also creating an environment that improves health. To achieve this, The University of Texas at San Antonio has created an integrated program in which Occupational Health, Safety, Wellness, and Benefits work together to improve both the environment and health and safety culture at UTSA.

Under the OHS Manager, I participated in job hazard assessments, wellness evaluations, ergonomic evaluations, workers compensation trend analysis, TPP funding requests, the flu shot and biometric screening clinic, and the annual health fair.

For my final project, I created a dynamic warm up to reduce injury and muscle strain in Facilities employees.

Public Health Significance

The Public Health Essential Service that most closely relates to my practicum experience is number three, “Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues.”

A significant part of improving Total Worker Health is informing the individual of their own health problems/risks, and educating them on the resources available to improve or reduce those risks.

Ergonomic evaluations are an opportunity to educate employees on proper work behaviors to avoid chronic pain.

Wellness evaluations monitor health over time and provide an opportunity to teach employees how to take control of their health and fitness levels.

Continuing education opportunities, such as the Back Injury Prevention course, teach at risk individuals safe ways to perform job functions and aid in the creation of a safety culture.

Advice for Future Practicum Students

• Find a practicum that will expose you to as many learning opportunities as possible, even if that means reaching out to local health organizations yourself.

Practicum Highlights

• Completion of OSHA 10 HR General Industry Safety Certification
• Creation of a dynamic warm up for Facilities Movers to perform prior to heavy lifting to reduce injury and muscle strain

Rowdy Wellness

Health Starts Here

Improving the Health and Wellness of UTSA employees.

Source: http://utsarowdywellness.wix.com/rowdy#about/c1enr

Improving the Health and Wellness of UTSA employees.

Source: http://utsarowdywellness.wix.com/rowdy#about/c1enr

Providing caption describing image/photo.

Source: http://utsarowdywellness.wix.com/rowdy#about/c1enr

Improving the Health and Wellness of UTSA employees.

Source: http://utsarowdywellness.wix.com/rowdy#about/c1enr
Assessing Stigma in Populations with HIV/AIDS in San Antonio  
By: Camille Spears

Over the course of almost a year, the Stigma Survey project has been in development and in progress at the downtown FFACTS clinic. The clinic provides a variety of health services on a sliding scale to people living with HIV and AIDS in San Antonio. This project is a 30 min. optional survey aimed at understanding this population better. Specifically, the survey aims to understand the impact that stigma has among people living with HIV, the effect stigma has on adherence to treatment, and the effect stigma has on condom use. I did not personally develop the survey instrument, but I managed and administered surveys in person by working with triage nurses and maintained records after data collection. The survey numbers are close to meeting goals for the project, but have not yet met the threshold to begin analyzing the data. I look forward to the results so they may be used to develop targeted interventions.

Public Health Significance

The primary service that this survey fulfills is the public health service of monitoring health status to identify and solve community health problems. We are monitoring stigma as a predictor for health status so that we may better understand these predictors and tailor interventions and primary care to address them. In this way, we aim to fulfill a second service of evaluating the quality of personal and population-based health services.

Is the public health system doing a good job addressing the variety of struggles faced by people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA)? How can health care providers address stigma in PLWHA?

We hope to solve these and other dilemmas with the detailed assessment of the many different aspects of stigma. The FFACTS clinic is currently providing a multidisciplinary care approach with team members that provide social, emotional, and physical healthcare and it is my hope that they can improve their evidence-based care with the data gleaned from this project.
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/