

Public Health Practice-Based Immersion: Practical Lessons Learned from Tianjin, China

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Background

The Office of Public Health Practice at the University of Michigan School of Public Health's (OPHP UM-SPH) mission is to strengthen the public health practice community through creation of opportunities for applied research, education, and lifelong learning. Recognizing the shortage of public health students entering practice-based careers at graduation, the OPHP UM-SPH provides graduate public health students with field experiences necessary to their future careers as practitioners.

Objectives

- Describe the utility of student practice-based experiences as a means for applying knowledge from the classroom to the field.
- Describe the value of student practice-based experiences in the recruitment of future public health practitioners.
- Compare the differences between public health guidelines and practices in Tianjin, China and the United States with regard to maternal and child health and infectious diseases.
- Discuss the practical applications of knowledge gained through this field based practice experience.

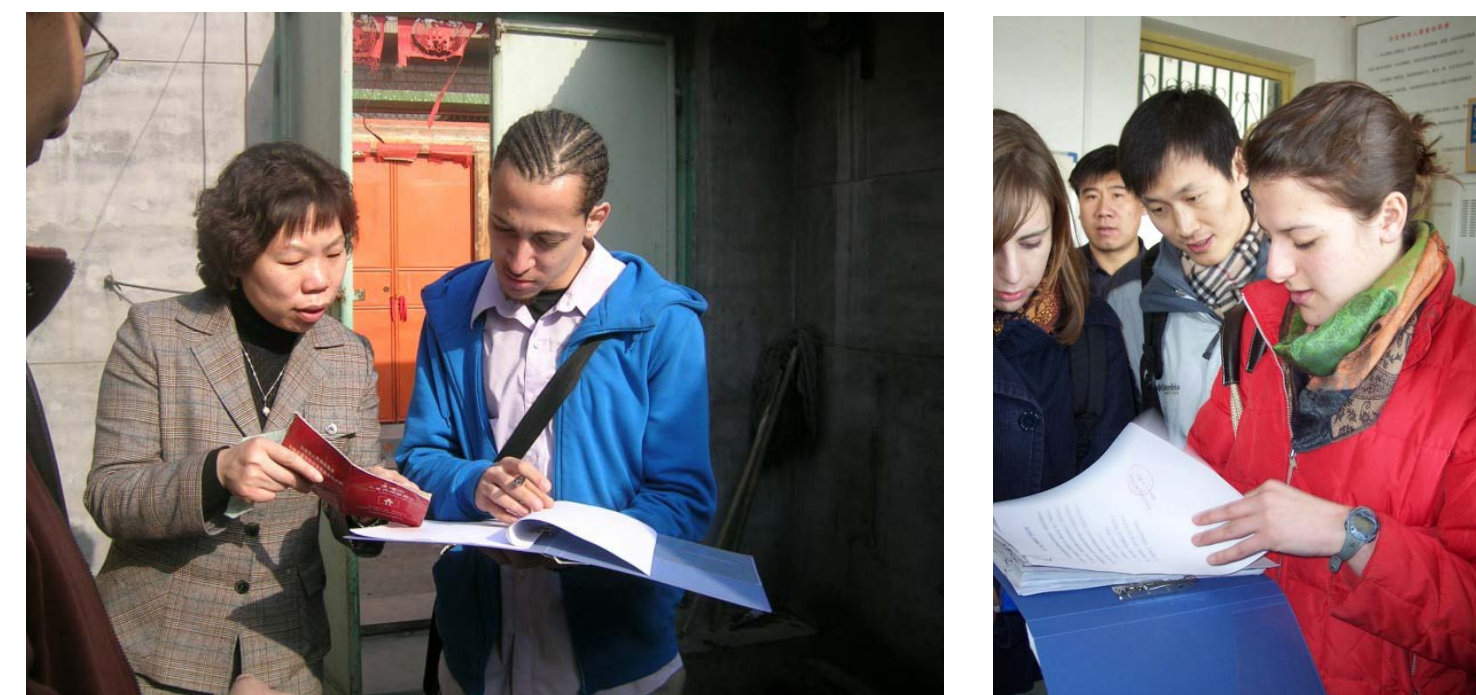
Practice-Based Immersion

- Structured training exchange and research collaboration
- 12 public health students; 1 staff member; 2 faculty
 - Two groups with mixed public health disciplines
- 1-week intensive immersion
 - Maternal and child health program
 - Infectious disease program
- Shadowing health professionals at health clinics, hospitals, postpartum home health care visits, measles follow-up home visits, attendance at educational lectures, dialogue comparing practices in China with practices in the US.

Comparison of Guidelines/Practices



	United States	China
Maternal and child health		
○ Prenatal care	-Health education messages/materials specific to patient population	-3 free prenatal visits
○ Postpartum care and newborn care	-Hospital stay (~1-2 days)	-Hospital stay (~4 days) -Foot massage to stimulate lactation -Three free home health visits -Newborn pool
Infectious Disease		
○ Vaccination program	-Different program based on payment option -Mandatory; opt-out option	-Free -Mandatory; no-opt out
○ Surveillance system	-State based systems - >60 Nationally notifiable diseases	-National notifiable disease reporting system. -27 Notifiable diseases



Practical Applications

- Observed public health professionals in the field
- Observed cultural differences between China and the U.S. in the planning and delivery of health services
- Interviewed health professionals and community members
- Recognized importance of multidisciplinary teamwork and respect for the relevant contributions from each public health discipline
- Identified advantages and disadvantages in the public health method in the US and China systems
- Opportunity for skills building in cultivating a nonjudgmental and receptive approach to nontraditional views
- Evaluated different health care systems
- Explained the U.S. health care system, surveillance systems, vaccination programs, and maternal and child health programs
- Recommended thoughtful actions for improving public health in China.
- Illustrated importance of familiarity with a community and/or region prior to planning health education and vaccination campaigns

Lessons Learned

- ✓ No one model is ideal for all public health programs
- ✓ Classroom theories/protocols are helpful but often require translation in identifying a creative solution that will work for population of interest
- ✓ Prevailing cultural and governmental structure can effect healthcare systems and patient compliance
- ✓ Language and culture may be a barrier in international immersion experiences
- ✓ Public health terminology is subject to cultural norms and may have different meanings to persons from different countries and cultures
- ✓ Be prepared to provide reciprocal open and honest dialogue on health systems/protocols