

Winter 2020 Practicum Abstracts – MPH Health Promotion Students

U. Y.

Health Canada – Environmental Health Program Ontario

Health Canada is the Government of Canada department that is responsible for aiding Canadians in maintaining and improving their health and federal health policy. The Environmental Health Program (EHP) within Health Canada is part of the Regulatory Operations and Enforcement Branch (ROEB) and serves to maintain and improve the health of Canadians by identifying, assessing, managing and communicating health risks in the environment through five different programs: Air Quality, Chemical Management Plan (CMP), Radon, Contaminated Sites, and Environmental Assessment. Building partnerships and engaging stakeholders are central components to the department's unique role in environmental and human health.

In this role, I worked on a variety of projects and participated in outreach activities. The projects I worked on includes the following: 1) Analysis of the comments database and identifying generic comments for consideration during Tailored Impact Statement Guideline reviews for mining projects 2) Environmental scan on provincial and territorial environmental assessment (EA)/impact assessment (IA) processes and Permits 3) Creation of a resource guide on health and wellness terms and concepts in Indigenous languages to support Indigenous engagement activities under the *Impact Assessment Act* 4) Research project to identify processes to identify determinants of health and mitigation/enhancement measures within Indigenous communities 5) Compile information on regional assessment and monitoring programs related to Health Canada's Environmental Health Program's scopes.

Working on these projects enabled me to develop and expand on a variety of skills including qualitative research methods, conducting environmental scans, and application of policy, as well as build a solid understanding of the current research and best practices pertaining to environmental assessment and Indigenous health. Overall, this practicum was a great learning experience that enabled me to develop the relevant public health and health promotion skills that will undoubtedly serve me well in my future career.

A. M. S. B.

Dalla Lana School of Public Health – Outreach and Access Program

My practicum placement this winter 2020 was at the DLSPH supporting the Outreach and Access program-School Semester component. My role as an evaluator manager consisted of organizing the documentation the program had, creating missing components, selecting data collection methods, develop metrics and finally to write the evaluation plan for the program. My three main deliverables were creating a program plan, a program logic model and finally an evaluation plan. These three deliverables felt sequential as one proceeded the other one. In having completed all three deliverables, I felt I deepen my knowledge of the program and practiced the skills I learned during my courses. My recommendation for a future practicum student who is interested in evaluation is that they also take

courses on data collection and to utilize your assignments as templates unless your organization provides you with one.

C. M. R.

University Health Network – Eating Disorder Program

This winter term, I completed a practicum at the Toronto General Hospital Eating Disorder Program under the supervision of Dr. George Paslakis. The eating disorder inpatient program at the Toronto General Hospital is one of very few specialized units worldwide that offers a combined model of treatment that simultaneously addresses the medical and psychiatric sequelae of patients with severe eating disorders. During my practicum, I was tasked with completing a retrospective analysis of the medical services provided in this specialized eating disorder inpatient unit. This project involved extracting medical data from patient charts, cleaning and auditing the dataset, conducting statistical analysis, and preparing a manuscript that was subsequently submitted for publication.

As a secondary project, I conducted the statistical analysis for a project examining the prevalence and psychopathology of vegetarians and vegans in a representative German sample. I also contributed to preparing the associated manuscript for this project, which has since been accepted for publication. Throughout my practicum, I was also responsible for leading participant recruitment into our ongoing study validating the State Urge to be Physically Active Questionnaire (SUPAQ). Although individuals with eating disorders often engage in excessive exercise, there are currently no questionnaires that assess this commonly reported urge to engage in physical activity. Thus, the outcome of this project will fill an important gap in clinical practice.

J. A. R.

University of Toronto Scarborough – Global Health Innovations Lab

My practicum took place at the UTSC where I acted as research coordinator for the Global Health Innovations Lab (GHIL) under Professor Ezezika Obidimma. The lab focuses on two streams of research, pedagogical innovations and applied research. Pedagogy focuses on the field of research in educational settings and how new techniques can be found to support students in the class room. In my position I worked with my supervisor to complete two projects during my practicum: A systematic review and working on a manuscript focusing on pedagogical research. For the systematic review I created a protocol to register the project before starting data analysis and extraction. I supervised a student at UTSC to review literature on Vitamin A Supplementation Projects across the world. We gathered articles, screened them and extracted data to be used for a future paper on the topic. Through this whole project I and my partner were supported by a librarian at UTSC who aided us throughout the research process. For the manuscript I worked with my supervisor to help refine primary data collected by a previous student into a cohesive paper. Working with the GHIL I was also able to present my ongoing research projects to the lab a few times across the practicum placement. This allowed me to showcase my work to my fellow co-workers and check-in with my supervisor to see how my projects were going overall.

M. C. P.

MAP Centre for Urban Health Solutions – Upstream Lab

The Upstream Lab, located in the MAP Centre for Urban Health Solutions conducts a variety of research surrounding the social determinants of health. I had the opportunity to complete my practicum placement for the winter of 2020 at the Upstream Lab as a Research Student. I was able to refine my research skills, particularly my qualitative and quantitative analysis as well as my manuscript writing skills. Through my placement, I worked on three main projects: a systematic review on predictive modelling and electronic medical records, a systematic review on methods to evaluate basic income interventions and an employment and HIV study.

Through both the systematic reviews, I was able to develop my understanding on the importance and structure of systematic reviews in carrying out research projects. In both of the reviews, I was able to participate in title and abstract screening, full text screening, data extraction as well as manuscript writing. I was able to apply PRISMA standards and engage with two interdisciplinary teams in this process.

The final project that I was involved in, was conducting qualitative and quantitative analysis on data from an employment and HIV study. I was able to code over 20 semi-structured interviews and focus groups, while also drafting a qualitative and mixed-method based manuscript. Additionally, I was able to quantitatively analyze data, which included cleaning and processing data through a statistical software. Each of these projects advanced my research skills and prepared me for my future endeavors in the field of public health.

H. N. P.

Dalla Lana School of Public Health

The University of Toronto and the IDRC are leaders in research. My practicum experience involved working with raw qualitative data and findings from an evaluation. More specifically, I was involved with using the data to determine the role of field building that the IDRC, a funder, had. When I wasn't working on the aforementioned manuscript, I was writing up a technical brief focused on gender and equity in research, again from a research funders perspective.

This practicum allowed me to improve upon my writing skills and the ability to tailor my writing to various audiences (i.e. lay, policy, scientific). It also allowed me to learn about the role of research funders in improving the health of populations through research. I focused a lot of food systems research, which was an area entirely new to me, and thus, I was able to gain public health knowledge in this area.

C. T. M.

Family Service Toronto – Knowledge Building

In this placement, the student (1) developed a better understanding of program evaluation; (2) developed a better understanding of knowledge building/exchange; and (3) further developed the skills required to engage in dialogue and collaboration with internal and external stakeholders. This placement involved extensive collaboration with the Knowledge Building team at FST and other agencies and organizations in Toronto, as well as strategic planning work within FST.

For their deliverables, the student contributed to the writing of several reports. This included reports on staff and board member diversity; board member skills; an annual report on a program which supports newcomers to recognize and address abuse and violence in their community; and a report for a program which supports families experiencing change related to parent separation/divorce. Developing these reports involved both qualitative and quantitative data analysis.

The student also contributed to the writing of grant proposals for the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and the Toronto Urban Health Fund (TUHF). The TUHF grant proposal focused on LGBTQ2S+ youth resilience in the Church-Wellesley corridor in Toronto. For the SSHRC proposal, the student was the lead editor, where the team advocated for peer support for women with intellectual/developmental disabilities who have experienced sexual assault. She coordinated with seven stakeholders/partners from five organizations (FST, Women's College Hospital, York University, University of Victoria, and the University of Western Ontario). She revised multiple iterations of the project description and expected outcomes based on partner feedback. She ensured all SSHRC requirements were fulfilled, including receiving partner signatures and CVs. Lastly, the student also collaborated with her team to edit and write the draft of a manuscript on immigrant senior social isolation.

K. M.

Health Canada – Climate Change and Innovation Bureau

For my final practicum, I worked at the Climate Change and Innovation Bureau located within Health Canada in Ottawa. As a policy analyst, I worked primarily on our Heat Alert and Response Systems responsible for providing Canadians with the resources and information to take protective action against extreme heat. I also worked within the Health Promotion and Outreach team, working to increase awareness amongst Canadians of heat-related health risks. In this role I was able to complete tasks such as policy analyses and briefs, create presentations to be presented to national partners and to work on the Summer 2020 Heat Strategy. Throughout this experience I was able to focus on three Health Promotion competencies: I was able to collect, analyze and recommend action from our heat health data to inform our HARS planning. I was able to develop a course of action taking into account relevant evidence in order to inform our health communication and outreach activities. Throughout all of this, I was able to collaborate with partners in order to ensure that the work we were supporting them with was meaningful and relevant to their communities. I am very grateful for this practicum opportunity and excited to continue working at CCIB and furthering Canada's extreme heat work.

M. A. F. M.

St. Michael's Hospital – Head Injury Clinic

St. Michael's Hospital, also known as SMH is one of the biggest scientific research and teaching hospital in the world with different expertise. The research team in the hospital is dedicated to searching for answers, helping, emphasizing, and caring for patients. The role of the clinic was to provide consultation, treatment, and conduct research in the area of traumatic brain injury. At SMH, I worked under the supervision of Dr. Cindy Hunt. When I first started my placement there, I originally developed a research proposal to examine the association between early childhood traumatization and moderate traumatic brain injury among Canadian women. However, due to the length of the placement and based on our mutual interests, Dr. Hunt and I decided to shift the topic to develop a narrative review on the coping mechanisms used by women all over the world to recover from mild traumatic brain injury (also known as concussion). I started by conducting a literature review on all the topic of mTBI to better understand what is already known about the topic and what is missing. I gathered as much information and knowledge as I can to be able to write the narrative review. The review was a bit challenging to due to the lack of research on the topic chosen. However, under the supervision of Dr. Hunt, I was able to write it and summarize the literature using her guidance and my knowledge. This review is now ready to be submitted to the Journal of Public Health and we are hoping to have it published.

J. K.

Region of Peel – Housing Services

For my second Master of Public Health, Health Promotion practicum I worked for the Region of Peel in the Housing Services Division within the Human Services Department. The Human Services Department offers a wide range of social services to residents living in Peel Region, such as Ontario Works benefits, employment support, assistance with utility bills, various types of subsidies and housing supports. In Housing Services, one of the main goals of my division through client services is to increase affordable housing and prevent homelessness.

My supervisor is the Region of Peel supervisor for all of the regionally owned emergency shelters, which has provided me a unique opportunity to work on shelter-related projects including a jurisdictional scan of shelter policies, weekly shelter occupancy reporting, shelter audit tool creation, and opportunities to meet with shelter clients and staff. During my practicum, I have been supporting program analysts in my division on policy-related work, program evaluation, data cleaning and analysis, and co-ordination of various projects in the areas of affordable housing and homelessness. I assist with analyzing trends, conducting research, and determining financial impacts. I have been able to carry out all of this work with the lens my public health degree has provided me, specifically housing as a social determinant of health. Social services and public health are inherently linked, which is why I believe there are many opportunities and overlap between the fields.

K. R. J.

Public Health Agency of Canada – Centre for Communicable Diseases and Infection Control

As part of Canada's *Five-Year Sexually-Transmitted and Blood-Borne Infection (STBBI) Action Plan*, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has committed to working with stakeholders to develop STBBI-related indicators and targets, which includes indicators and targets around sexual health education (SHE). The Action Plan identifies the importance of SHE as part of a comprehensive approach to STBBI prevention. During this practicum I designed an indicator framework for sexual health education. It is composed of two types of indicators: (1) Access Indicators, which measure access to sexual health education through review of curricula, and (2) Knowledge/Attitude Indicators, which measure knowledge and attitudes around STBBI through survey questions. The framework I designed will contribute to measuring the Government of Canada's progress towards its goals around STBBI prevention, and will feed into the Government of Canada's STBBI Five-Year Action Plan Indicator Framework more broadly. I spent the majority of my practicum designing the framework itself, through a literature review, environmental scan, and through collaboration with stakeholders within PHAC and across the Health Portfolio. In the later stages of my practicum, I presented the framework to the Programs and Partnerships department, and wrote a briefing note for concurrence on the framework, addressed to the Vice President of PHAC.

M. J.

Health Canada – Climate Change and Innovation Bureau

As a Student Policy Analyst with Health Canada's Climate Change and Innovation Bureau (CCIB), I developed a variety of research and policy skills that are essential for working with the government. The Climate Change and Innovation Bureau (CCIB) is the focal point within the Safe Environments Directorate for coordinating research and disseminating information about the impacts of climate change on the health and well-being of Canadians. The mandate of the bureau is to help Canadians better understand and adapt to the impacts of climate change on their health. My role involved supporting the bureau's capacity-building program, HealthADAPT. HealthADAPT aims to help the health sector prepare for and respond to the impacts of climate change. Its objectives are to increase understanding of climate change on health systems, the health of Canadians and identify vulnerable communities at risk. I learned about regional climate change health adaptation plans and the monitoring and evaluation of the plans. I had several opportunities to prepare briefing notes and speaking points for senior management. I was also responsible for developing a research paper on climate resilient rural healthcare systems as well as preparing a meeting report for program stakeholders.

A. B.

Sherbourne Health Centre – Health Promotion (Newcomer Health)

The Health Promotion – Newcomer Health Intern at Sherbourne Health Centre works alongside the Health Promotion and Systems Specialist to plan, implement, and evaluate health promotion programs for newcomers in the St James Town (SJT) area of Downtown Toronto. While I was given the opportunity

to engage in several projects with the Newcomer department, there were two large projects I was involved in: planning a needs assessment in SJT and creating a Health Promotion Framework for Sherbourne Health Centre.

The SJT Spring Gathering is an annual community gathering which acts as a needs assessment for residents. During this event residents of SJT voice their concerns about the neighborhood and provide feedback about health topics brought up in previous years. As a coordinator for this needs assessment, I was to help develop the consultation methodology and train peers/residents in the methodology. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, the Spring Gathering was cancelled, and my focus was shifted towards meeting the needs of residents during the pandemic. The other main project that I was involved in was creating a Health Promotion Framework for the entire organization. This framework aims to aid Sherbourne employees and volunteers to reflect and improve their health promotion strategies, initiatives, and practices. The document provides health promotion guidelines and tools to assess and improve practices at all levels of the organization. As a team member of the writing committee, I contributed to the writing and review of this ongoing document.

Overall, this placement provides students with opportunities to engage with residents and staff, creating a holistic learning environment.

E. M. A.

Planned Parenthood Toronto – Community Programming and Research

Planned Parenthood Toronto is a community health centre that provides medical services and community programming for sexual and reproductive health to Toronto youth. The student practicum at Planned Parenthood Toronto offered a range of opportunities to develop research skills and directly engage with community members. Firstly, this practicum entailed editing a previously written needs assessment on the experiences of youth living with disabilities regarding their sexual and reproductive health needs in medical and community settings. This included providing feedback to the completed report and reviewing quantitative and qualitative research data to incorporate in the final report. Secondly, this practicum also entailed creating a literature review on the benefits and challenges of peer education in sexual health promotion and education with youth. This literature review was submitted to the management team to consider for future programming at Planned Parenthood Toronto. Thirdly, ArcGIS, a geospatial software system, was used to create maps displaying the STI and teen pregnancy rates in Toronto neighbourhoods. Additional data including transportation access and income status was added to complete the analysis of high-risk neighbourhoods. Lastly, this practicum included engaging with community members, specifically young adult sex workers who had previously participated in research projects at Planned Parenthood Toronto. A youth advisory group was formed, and meetings were held to discuss the creation of a resource to help young adult sex workers if they want to disclose their sex work experience to health care providers. The findings from these meetings were summarized and submitted to the Community Programming and Research team.

L. C.

Association of Ontario Midwives – Clinical Knowledge Translation

The Association of Ontario Midwives (AOM) is a non-profit organization that represents midwives, midwifery students and midwifery practice across Ontario. My placement was located within the Clinical Knowledge Translation (CKT) department, where I had the opportunity to work with a team of research and knowledge translation specialists and content developers. Over the course of my practicum, I contributed to a number of research, knowledge translation and evaluation projects. A core focus of the CKT department is the development of evidence-informed clinical practice guidelines (CPGs) that incorporate midwifery values and philosophy of care including informed choice, client as the primary decision maker, choice of birthplace, and appropriate use of technology. I supported the updating of two CPGs, Post-Dates Pregnancies and Vaginal Birth After Caesarean Section, by drafting background sections and developing research summaries using the GRADE methodology. I also worked on a knowledge translation project to improve data elements in the provincial BORN database to better reflect midwifery care. This included developing knowledge translation materials on various data elements and leading a task force meeting. Finally, I led a cross-departmental project to strengthen the evaluation process for the AOM's professional development program. This work involved a comprehensive review of the current evaluation process, methods and tools using key informant interviews and a document review to identify key challenges and develop recommendations as well as create pre and post survey templates, and analyze three years of quantitative and qualitative survey data. This placement provided an excellent opportunity to pursue my interest in maternal and child health and strengthen my research and evaluation skills in an inclusive and supportive team environment.