

Winter 2021 Practicum Abstracts – MPH Health Promotion Students

A. S.

Public Health Agency of Canada

I completed my second practicum at the Office of International Affairs for the Health Portfolio (OIA) at the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). As a Junior Policy Analyst, I supported the team responsible for Canada's engagement and relationship with a key multilateral organization, the World Health Organization (WHO), when both PHAC and the WHO were front and centre in the public's consciousness. As part of the WHO team, I helped represent Canada's domestic interests in the global health arena and drive global health policy development through the strategic policy work of the OIA during the most important public health crisis in modern history. I provided the Health Portfolio senior management up-to-date information on the COVID-19 pandemic and how the WHO is responding and what they are recommending. I developed a variety of briefing products, including summaries of the biweekly WHO press conferences which were distributed across OIA and to other areas of the Portfolio responsible for the COVID-19 response. Based on these summaries and other WHO activities, I provided high-level daily bullets to the Manager of the WHO team for onward and upward distribution to inform Agency response activities. I had a unique opportunity to provide analytical, logistical, and operational support for the work of the WHO team within the Multilateral Relations Division during the 148th meeting of the WHO Executive Board and during the intersessional period leading to the 74th World Health Assembly (WHA) in May 2021. I developed reports to inform Canada's policy positions on three resolutions: 1) Strengthening pandemic preparedness and response, 2) Health and care workers, and 3) mental health, which were being negotiated prior to the WHA. Additionally, I played a prominent role in OIA's anti-racism, diversity, and inclusion corporate initiative, SHIFT-A (Supporting Healthy and Inclusive Foundations Towards Action). This working group seeks to catalyze conversation on key issues regarding racism, equity, and inclusion to: 1) Foster a more inclusive organizational environment and culture within OIA; and 2) Raise awareness of policy-issues related to equity and racism, and the connections to the work advanced in OIA in global and public health. SHIFT-A hosted a Lunch Time Trivia Event for Black History Month and a Fireside Chat on decolonization public health.

L. B.

Public Health Agency of Canada – Ontario Ministry of Health

My second-year winter practicum placement was with the Public Health Agency of Canada, supporting the Ontario Ministry of Health's (MOH) COVID-19 response as a Public Health Officer. I worked in the Health System Emergency Management Branch, on the clinical guidance team, where we developed and disseminated COVID-19 related guidance to public health leaders across the province. I supported and led a variety of projects including case and contact management guidance for public health units, provincial testing guidance, vaccine prioritization and administration guidance and several patient-facing documents such as decision-making tools and infographics. Stakeholder engagement and consultation with public health units, Public Health Ontario, the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, hospitals and end-users was crucial for the development and implementation of all guidance pieces. It was a face-paced work environment where competing priorities had to be addressed while applying a health equity lens.

There were numerous key learning outcomes including gaining a stronger understanding of the policy approval process, the role of advocacy and attention to detail to ensure consistency across provincial guidance.

V. K. P.

Hospice Palliative Care Ontario

In my role as the Person-Centred Decision Making (PCDM) Project Coordinator at Hospice Palliative Care Ontario (HPCO), I contributed to HPCO's PCDM Provincial Strategy and the development of Advance Care Planning (ACP), Health Care Consent (HCC) and Goals of Care (GoC) resources and education for health care providers (HCPs) and the general public. I gained experience collaborating with a variety of stakeholders; enhanced my program evaluation, project management, knowledge transfer and research skills; and gained valuable exposure to provincial level health systems and policy development. I achieved these objectives through facilitating and evaluating virtual and telephone-based ACP programs for seniors and isolated individuals and preparing a briefing note for the Ministry of Health (MOH) Treasury Board that demonstrated the socioeconomic impact of grief and bereavement in Ontario during the COVID-19 pandemic. I also developed a summary report of evaluation data from HPCO's PCDM workshops, compiled research on pediatric ACP resources for HCPs and families to support the development of clinical tools, produced content for the new Speak Up Ontario website, revised the Speak Up Ontario ACP Workbook and coordinated the PCDM Dragon's Den Symposium. Overall, throughout my practicum placement with HPCO I developed several health promoter competencies and contributed to the provision of high-quality hospice palliative care in Ontario.

M. S.

Ontario Health – Population Health and Prevention Unit

I completed my practicum with the Population Health and Prevention Unit at Ontario Health. As part of my practicum, I supported the development of the 2021 Prevention System Quality Index (PSQI) short report. The PSQI is a report that focuses on policy and program indicators associated with cancer risk factors and exposures in Ontario. My role was to conduct a literature review on cancer risk among individuals with mental illness and addictions using grey and academic literature sources. Additionally, I identified themes and indicators to develop an outline of the PSQI short report. As part of the Health Equity working group at the Population Health and Prevention Unit, I developed an environmental scan report on policies and practices in the prevention sector that address anti-racism and health equity. I have also supported the development of training resources for the COVID-19 Provincial Antigen Screening Program. Specifically, I supported the development of a question and answer sheet for employees regarding the rapid antigen testing program.

C. D.

Public Health Agency of Canada – Centre for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Equity

The purpose of the practicum position at Public Health Agency of Canada's (PHAC) Global Health and Guidelines Division, Centre for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Equity was to work with the project lead to develop the cardiovascular disease (CVD) framework/guideline. The objectives of this practicum was to: analyze CVD risk assessment tools validated in the Canadian population; analyze systematic reviews that have assessed the efficacy of CVD risk assessment tools; complete a scoping review of CVD frameworks/guidelines/recommendations developed by other jurisdictions; critically appraise these frameworks; extract the specific components that were included in these frameworks (i.e., diabetes, dyslipidemia, obesity, tobacco, etc.); and present the methodology and findings to the Working Group (WG). In addition to the main learning objective, clinical experts and former chair members were contacted to determine if three specific guidelines (pelvic exam, developmental delay, and cognitive impairment) developed by the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care (CTFPHC) requires an update or reaffirmation. Overall, the WG concluded that the aim of integrating a risk assessment tool in the CVD framework would be to initiate conversation regarding the patient's risk for CVD as opposed to quantifying the patient's risk for CVD. The scoping review produced 15 frameworks from various jurisdictions (Canada, US, England, Europe, Brazil) and provided insight into the specific components that were included, the presentation of the framework, and the risk assessment tools that were recommended. Based on the WG discussion, it was determined that the next step would include developing a systematic methodology for selecting components that would be included in the CTFPHC's CVD framework. The work done thus far for the CVD framework is documented in the scoping report.

L. C.

Public Health Agency of Canada – Outbreak Management Division

For my second practicum, I worked as a Public Health Analyst at the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). Specifically, I worked in the Outbreak Management Division (OMD) within the Centre for Food-borne, Environmental and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases (CFEZID). The goal of my practicum was to complete an evaluation of Enteric Outbreak Central, a secure web-based platform used by OMD to facilitate information sharing between investigative partners during multijurisdictional enteric disease outbreaks. My responsibilities involved creating a project timeline, developing a framework for the evaluation, consulting with stakeholders, collecting quantitative and qualitative data, analyzing data, and creating an internal report to summarize my findings and recommendations. During my time with OMD, I was also able to observe the work of the Assessment and Detection Team (ADT) and the Response Team. For one week, I shadowed ADT and learned more about how they monitor new cases of enteric illness, assess clusters, and initiate follow-up with provincial and territorial partners. On the Response side, I observed a number of Outbreak Investigation Coordinating Committee (OICC) meetings and post-outbreak internal debriefs, which allowed me to gain an understanding of OMD's role in responding to multijurisdictional enteric outbreaks. Finally, I also had the opportunity to support COVID-19 efforts at the federal level by completing a week-long assignment as a webscraper with the Health Portfolio Operations Centre (HPOC). I assisted with surveillance activities by updating the agency's outbreak database with information from provincial and local public health websites, conducting media scans to identify emerging outbreaks across the country, and producing a daily outbreak highlights report.

S. M. D.

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health – Client and Family Education Program

Health literacy is “the ability to access, comprehend, evaluate and communicate information as a way to promote, maintain and improve health in a variety of settings across the life-course.” During this pandemic, we realized the importance of health literacy as it helps decrease people's fear and anxiety of the unknown. When people did not know what the COVID-19 virus was, a global hysteria occurred. However, today, people are familiar with the COVID-19 virus and have information that decreased their hysteria, paranoia, and panic. As such, health literacy is crucial as it educates people, which in turn promotes their health. Vaccine hesitancy is a global challenge because many people did not know what the vaccines contain, why they were developed quickly, and what their side effects are. The unknown exacerbates one's mental illness and/or addiction challenges. As such, CAMH decided to develop COVID-19 vaccine information sheets targeting people with mental illness and/or addiction. These information sheets provide evidence-based information about the vaccines written in a simplified language. Vaccine hesitancy decreased ever since the vaccines were approved because people learn more about the vaccines, and myths such as “the vaccine have a microchip” are debunked by credible sources. As such, health literacy is crucial and key to improve one's health.

A. B.

Daily Bread Food Bank

Background: Daily Bread Food Bank is a non-profit, rights-based organization whose mission is to end food insecurity and advocate for solutions to end poverty. My practicum was based in the Research and Advocacy Team where I delved into research, policy and advocacy on food insecurity and poverty in Toronto.

Objectives and Results: My practicum objectives were to collect, analyze, and interpret data on food insecurity and poverty reduction in Toronto. This was done through several projects, namely through coordinating and training volunteers for the annual Who's Hungry survey conducted in partner agencies with food bank clients, conducting phone surveys with food program clients, and consolidating 10 years of these surveys to conduct a trend analysis on deep poverty in Toronto. Another objective was to use research to inform strategic policy advice and advocacy strategies at the provincial and organizational level. At the organizational level, this was done through creating a research policy framework for Daily Bread for requests to conducting research with food program clients. Furthermore, I further developed an evaluation survey for the coalitions that Daily Bread sits on to assess the organizations' participation and contribution. I further wrote 2 blog posts on temporary foreign workers and on mental health and food insecurity. Finally, I was exposed to government relations work and advocacy coalition meetings, to expand my understanding of Canadian governance systems (municipal, provincial, and federal) and food systems in relation to poverty reduction and food insecurity.

R. F.

Hospice Palliative Care Ontario

My practicum was with Hospice Palliative Care Ontario (HPCO) as an intern for the Quality Hospice Palliative Care Coalition of Ontario (QHPCCO or "The Coalition"). HPCO is a provincial association that collaborates with hospices and other health care providers to advance high quality hospice palliative care in Ontario. The Coalition, for which HPCO is secretariat, consists of approximately twenty members, including research institutions, professional associations, and advocacy organizations. My work included a summary report on the current state of palliative care in Ontario, engaging in advocacy to advance caregivers' rights, and presenting recommendations to the provincial government on how to support palliative care. This allowed me the opportunity to strengthen my stakeholder engagement skills as I met with coalition members and external groups. I also collaborated on a briefing note about the socioeconomic impacts of grief and bereavement in Ontario during the COVID-19 pandemic. I had a positive learning experience, applying my skills and knowledge to a subject area that is not always remembered as being relevant to public health. The experience of working in a small, provincial NGO and coordinating with numerous stakeholders has complemented the ongoing development of my policy and advocacy skills. I would recommend a placement with HPCO for the opportunity to learn more about why palliative care is a public health issue, and to apply health promotion skills in a supportive remote working environment.

C. C.

Association of Ontario Midwives – Clinical Knowledge Translation Department

The Association of Ontario Midwives (AOM) is an organization that works to advance the clinical and professional practice of midwives in Ontario. As a practicum student on the Clinical Knowledge Translation team at the AOM, I worked on several research and knowledge translation projects. First, the AOM is currently running a campaign entitled Midwifery Data Matters. This campaign aims to increase midwives knowledge of the importance of data and support them to use the data available to them through the provincial database, BORN. I worked to develop knowledge translation materials for this campaign, including posts for the midwifery memo and social media posts. Additionally, I supported the development of a clinical practice guideline on Group B Streptococcus (GBS). As a part of this project, I helped to update the search strategy to review the GBS literature and assisted in screening articles for inclusion and exclusion. I then reviewed the included articles on the impact of oral probiotics, chlorhexidine and prenatal antibiotics on GBS. I assessed the evidence from these articles using the GRADE methodology and wrote research summaries on the findings. Completing my practicum at the AOM was an excellent experience. I was able to further my interest in maternal and reproductive health and develop my research, literature review and knowledge translation skills.

O. T.

Dalla Lana School of Public Health – Social and Behavioral Health Sciences

I completed my second practicum with the Re:searching for LGBTQ2S+ Health Team at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health (DLSPH), University of Toronto this winter term (January-March 2021). As an MPH Student Program Evaluator (supervised by Dr. Lori Ross and Michelle Tam, PhD candidate at DLSPH), I collaborated with a diverse research team on the *Building Competence, Building Capacity: 2SLGBTQ+*

Competent Trauma Informed Care project (funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)). This project encompassed a workshop designed for service providers in the trauma and violence sectors across Ontario and utilized mixed methods (i.e., quantitative and qualitative) to evaluate various indicators (e.g., knowledge increases across topics related to 2SLGBTQ+ people and 2SLGBTQ+ care). While I worked primarily on the quantitative data analysis, I also contributed to qualitative data analysis and knowledge translation activities. Specifically, I utilized SPSS Statistics software to analyze 200+ pre- and post- survey data and interpret the findings. In terms of the qualitative data analysis, I worked with NVivo software to analyze various codes and develop three theme memos surrounding sustainability and future directions (e.g., workshop modality). Through the timely completion of the data analysis, I also created the PowerPoint slides for the Advisory Committee Member meeting and had the opportunity to present key findings and answer any questions posed by the committee. Beyond working with data, I have also contributed to knowledge translation activities for the project including but not limited to a workshop facilitator's guide, final report, and evaluation manuscript. Overall, through this practicum placement, I have gained mixed methods research experience and greater technical skills while being able to apply and enhance my health promotion core competencies.

T. R. B.

Frayme – Engagement Portfolio

During the Winter 2021 term, I completed my second practicum with Frayme in the role of Engagement Partner, under the supervision of Micaela Harley, Senior Engagement and Knowledge Equity Lead. I greatly enjoyed my practicum experience at Frayme, as it provided me the opportunity to not only work within a close-knit, integrated team environment, but also to meet and collaborate with leaders in the youth mental health and substance use (YMHSU) system. As a knowledge mobilization project funded by Health Canada, Frayme aims to reduce duplication of efforts across the YMHSU system through facilitating knowledge exchange, and fostering collaboration between researchers, services providers, and individuals with lived expertise of mental health challenges. Working at Frayme provided me with an incredibly unique practicum experience and allowed me to learn more about the value of collaboration through knowledge mobilization that is critical to effecting systems-level change, both in the YMHSU system and in the Public Health sector more broadly. During my practicum, I had the opportunity to work on several projects both within the Engagement portfolio as well as across portfolios, in areas of Knowledge Mobilization and Network Partnerships. I enjoyed the interdisciplinary style of Frayme, and the small team size (13 staff, including myself) facilitated meaningful collaboration on all projects. In one project, I was able to take the lead on building a Town Hall strategy for youth and family engagement within an international, intersectoral research initiative. I also provided support and allyship to a team of youth and family co-moderators at Frayme's annual Learning Institute, an international, 3-day virtual conference that brought together service providers, researchers, community grassroots initiatives and youth and family advocate, with the goal of creating new and innovative ideas to challenge the mental health system by "defying convention." The experience I had working at Frayme was incredible, and really allowed me to my coursework and experienced at DLSPH into practice. I am so grateful to have had this opportunity.

M. V. R.

Health Canada – Climate Change and Innovation Bureau

The student engaged in a practicum opportunity within the Policy Division of the Climate Change and Innovation Bureau (CCIB) at Health Canada, the federal government's lead on climate change and health issues in Canada. The practicum supported CCIB's mandate to increase knowledge of climate change and health risks, along with evidence-based adaptation measures to reduce health risks. The student supported a range of projects related to the HealthADAPT program, a climate change and health adaptation and capacity building initiative that supports the human health and wellbeing objectives of the Pan Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change.

The student worked closely with the HealthADAPT team, comprising Policy Analysts and Public Health professionals, to support various projects within CCIB. The projects included: (1) planning and delivery of the HealthADAPT year-end partner's meeting; (2) synthesizing the meeting report; (3) developing a reference document on economic impacts of climate change; (4) finalizing maps of adaptation projects in Canada; (5) developing and delivering a presentation on American state preparedness; (6) supporting the re-launch of a Policy and Program Network; (7) engaging in the Mental Health and Wellness Committee; and (8) supporting other activities of the HealthADAPT program, as needed.

Through the practicum opportunity, the student gained meaningful experience and expanded their knowledge and competencies in areas of Health Promotion and Public Health Policy. In addition, the student had the opportunity to enhance their learnings on climate change and health, and further develop professional skills in communications, collaboration, and equity, diversity, and inclusion within a federal government setting.

M. J .R.

Nova Scotia Government - Department of Health and Wellness

Suicide is a pressing public health concern in Nova Scotia. The 2019 Suicide Prevention and Risk Reduction Framework (SPRR) identified six action areas for suicide prevention. Effective suicide prevention is informed by high quality evidence and ongoing surveillance of emerging trends in suicide-related mortality and morbidity. The Data Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group (DME) is making headway in establishing new data sharing agreements and fostering connections between data holds. From January to March 2021, I provided full time support to the DME group to address their current needs. The focus of this work was to develop a data pathway map that provides a foundational overview of all suicide data sources in Nova Scotia. In plain language, it describes where the data are, what data agreements are in place, how often data are collected and reported, as well as the general flow of data between stakeholders. From this work, I created an infographic on the state of suicide in Nova Scotia and gave four presentations on my project process and findings with stakeholders. Activities included a rapid review of suicide surveillance figures, thirteen stakeholder consultations, two working group consultations, facilitating stakeholder reviews of my draft figures, and knowledge translation of final products: two data map figures, an interactive data inventory, and a final report. Beyond this project, I supported day to day operations as needed, remaining flexible to priorities and opportunities as they became available. For

example, volunteering with the provincial COVID-19 lab, identifying key performance indicators, and responding to COVID-19 ministerial correspondence. In addition to this work, I completed an online Project Management course and enjoyed several job shadowing opportunities.

S. W.

Ontario HIV Treatment Network – Testing and Clinical Initiatives

During this practicum placement the student had the opportunity to work with both the Testing & Clinical Initiatives and Collective Impact teams at the Ontario HIV Treatment Network (OHTN). The focus of this practicum placement was primarily on the expansion of HIV testing, prevention, and treatment programs across the province. The practicum student contributed to the provincial rollout of the GetaKit initiative, a mailout HIV self-testing program developed in collaboration with the University of Ottawa, MAX Ottawa, and the AIDS Committee of Ottawa. The practicum student collaborated with partner organizations and stakeholders to develop region and population-specific content for the GetaKit program, including mental health and social support services, linkage to care resources, and HIV prevention resources. The student also worked to draft program guidelines for participating organizations, including pre and post-test counselling guidelines, and a PrEP assessment guideline. Finally, the practicum student also worked to identify the barriers, challenges, strengths, and existing linkage to care resources present at ASO partner sites in order to best tailor the program to meet their specific needs. The practicum student had the opportunity to present findings from the GetaKit program at the CAHR 2021 virtual conference.

The practicum student had the opportunity to develop an implementation and evaluation (IPIE) framework to guide future OHTN incubator projects, drawing on core concepts from the Knowledge-to-Action framework and Developmental Evaluation frameworks. The practicum student also worked on a variety of knowledge dissemination and health promotion programs, including the upcoming Positive News campaign, which is an educational and de-stigmatizing media campaign highlighting the progress made in HIV prevention and treatment. The student also worked on the collaborative development of the ACCHO Knowledge Network, which platforms HIV research conducted by and focused on African, Caribbean, and Black Ontarians, and the HQ Gay Men's Health Hub.

F. N.

Public Health Agency of Canada

I completed my second practicum working remotely as a Junior Policy Analyst at Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) in their Family and Gender Based Violence Prevention Unit (FGBV). I worked on a variety of projects including the solicitation process for an open Call for Proposals which allowed organizations to provide a Letter of Intent for health promotion projects they would like to receive funding for under the Government of Canada's Family Violence Prevention investment. For this file, I was involved in supporting the review process of proposals from these external organizations across Canada by evaluating and assessing the proposals. I was also involved in the development of tools and resources to track and record the assessments to help prepare for briefings to senior management. And I had the opportunity to collaborate with different teams across PHAC to coordinate the review process. I was also involved in the

process of responding from various policy requests from other units within PHAC and outside PHAC such as Justice Canada. In addition, I was involved in a file that focused on responding to requests from the public to the Family and Gender Based Violence Prevention Unit. I also aided with the review process for PHAC'S various Family Violence Prevention webpages.

M. W.

Action Against Hunger Canada – Gender and Nutrition

Action Against Hunger is a humanitarian organization with six headquarters around the world that focus on ending hunger in over fifty countries. The Canadian office uniquely provides evidenced-based technical support and evaluation for headquarters focused on implementing interventions and programming to mitigate hunger. For my second practicum, I acted as a technical coordinator for gender and nutrition to provide a critical gender lens and technical support for the ongoing development of a gender-transformative approach for nutrition. Gender inequality has intermediate and causal links to malnutrition that connect through multi-sectoral pathways across the humanitarian sector. 2030 global nutrition targets to end hunger are behind and more targeted interventions are needed to transform gender inequalities that impede access to adequate nutrition. To address these issues, my practicum involved working with Action Against Hunger and six other Canadian non-governmental organizations that have developed the first Gender-Transformative Framework for Nutrition. The role looked at operationalizing theoretical concepts of the framework into tangible, technical concepts for the development of future processes at Action Against Hunger. This practicum placement had three objectives: 1) to support the planning stages of a meta-analysis on nutrition; 2) to provide the first draft of a technical guidance document on gender transformative approach; and, 3) provide technical coordination between gender and nutrition as well as communications with the coalition. This practicum also included knowledge dissemination on the new framework through a written report and the delivery of a headquarters presentation on GTFN. This practicum placement was brief but has evolved into full-time employment that will allow continued work on the GTFN project by providing technical support, and qualitative support for gender analysis. This practicum has provided an opportunity to continue gender equality work from my last practicum but in an innovative and technical capacity that supports real-life implementation of evidence-based work.