

School: University of Kansas School of Medicine  
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Associate Professor  
Department of Preventive Medicine and Public Health

Collaborating organizations: Kansas Department of Health and Environment  
Sedgwick County Health Department

### Project Description:

The University of Kansas School of Medicine (KU School of Medicine) commits to enhance the quality of life and serve our community through the discovery of knowledge, the education of health professionals and by improving the health of the public. Medical students spend their first two years, the pre-clinical phase, in Kansas City. The remaining two years, the clinical phase, are completed at either the campus in Kansas City or at the school's branch clinical campus in Wichita.

The first objective of the KU School of Medicine's RMPHEC was to increase experiential learning activities in public health settings in our required medical school courses. Tasks included in this objective were:

- 1) To increase the number of capstones at public health sites in the required Health of the Public 4th year clerkship so there is at least one per clerkship rotation, exposing 100% of medical students to this experience
- 2) To involve MPH students in these capstones so that joint learning occurs
- 3) To enhance the clerkship evaluation by assessing public health competencies.

The second objective was to study barriers to enrollment in our MD/MPH program. We achieved all these objectives.

Prior to the RMPHEC pilot project, public health and population-based medicine were included in the health promotion and disease prevention course for all first year medical students, in the clinical epidemiology course for all second year medical students, in clinical clerkships for third year medical students, and in the Health of the Public clerkship for all fourth year medical students. The medical school curriculum during the RMPHEC pilot project addressed basic sciences in Years 1 and 2, clinical clerkships in Year 3, and other required clerkships plus electives during Year 4.

Of the several activities supported by RMPHEC, the most important was to increase the visibility of traditional public health practice in the required fourth year clerkship, *Health of the Public*. The didactic component of this clerkship addressed how to define specific populations, ascertain their health needs, formulate interventions to meet those needs and evaluate the impact of those interventions. During the experiential component of the clerkship, groups of two to four students were placed in clinical, public health or community health settings. The student groups worked with site mentors to complete a capstone project. Public health capstones included a needs assessment to help develop community education on West Nile virus, an evaluation of the impact of new state laws on patient care practice, and others.

Evaluation after the RMPHEC year revealed that *Health of the Public* continued to provide medical students with capstone projects in traditional public health practice settings during the clerkship.

Publications: **None**

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