



**AAMC-CDC Cooperative Agreement Webinar Series:
Enhancing Your Medical Career with a Public Health Experience**

Frequently Asked Questions
Live Webinar: February 5, 2014

This document is a list of questions and answers from the webinar specifically about the EIS program and general public health training to assist medical students, residents, and mentors with medical career planning.

Webinar Presenters

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EIS Program Questions

1. What are the degree and licensing requirements for the EIS program? Do you have to be a U.S. citizen to apply?

Physicians must have at least one year of clinical training. Dentists, nurses, physician assistants, and doctors of pharmacy must have a master of public health (MPH) or equivalent degree. Veterinarians must have either an MPH (or equivalent degree) or relevant public health experience. Doctoral-level scientists with backgrounds in epidemiology; biostatistics; health informatics; social-behavioral, natural, or nutrition sciences; or other relevant health sciences are also eligible for the program. You do not have to be a U.S. citizen although there are few slots available within the program for other citizens. Additional eligibility requirements are available at www.cdc.gov/eis/eligibility.html.

2. When should you apply for the EIS program?

About half of the physician EIS officers apply for the EIS program during their final year of residency and thus begin the program immediately after residency. Others may complete fellowships first, or work clinically, and then find EIS 10 or 20 years after residency. Rarely, someone completes only an internship and comes straight to the EIS program.

3. Are there opportunities to work abroad with the EIS program?

EIS officers work in health departments throughout the U.S. or at the CDC. Although international work may be part of any EIS assignment, no assignments are based outside the U.S. A review of the EIS final assignments for the class of 2013 revealed that some positions, particularly with the Center for Global Health, had nearly 30-40% of time allotted for international travel.

4. What EIS opportunities are available for those who have interests in chronic disease (i.e.- occupational health, environmental health, injury)?

In 2013, there were 14 positions awarded within the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Positions are usually also available with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, and the National Center for Environmental Health or the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, all part of CDC. Other positions in state assignments can be focused on these fields or can be tailored to include work in the EIS officer's area(s) of interest.

5. What's the best way to prepare for the EIS program?

Some physicians accepted into the EIS program have an MPH (particularly in, but not limited to, epidemiology), have completed the CDC epidemiology elective as a medical student, or have some other public health experience (including Peace Corps). CDC does not require applicants to have public health experience or background, but applications are strengthened by a demonstrated history of interest in public health or the health of populations.

General Questions – Public Health Training

1. Is an MPH a necessary credential if you have an interest in public health?

The MPH degree is a graduate-level degree program that enhances students' knowledge in the core areas of public health, including epidemiology, communicable diseases, environmental health, policy, and behavioral sciences. The multi-disciplinary approach highlighted throughout MPH degree programs will help students better understand the social and environmental factors influencing the health of the communities in which they will practice. If you are a physician without public health experience or a credential like having been through the EIS program, an MPH is often helpful to obtain employment within a government setting. To obtain employment within academia, an MPH coupled with a strong research or practical experience is also helpful.

2. How do students find their niche within the public health field?

Students should explore multiple pathways within the public health field that appeal to their personal goals and interests. Unlike traditional academic medicine, public health leaders are notable for the broad number of health conditions they have worked on in their career. The public health community includes generalists and specialists whose interests can range from biostatistics or laboratory medicine to systems-issues that address healthcare delivery, disaster response, environmental health, maternal child health, and the prevention of chronic and infectious diseases and injury.

3. When should medical students begin exploring fellowship opportunities?

It is never too early for medical students to begin looking for fellowship opportunities. However, it is advantageous for medical students to begin exploring fellowship opportunities within their first and second year of medical school to increase their knowledge about the opportunities that are available, discuss the benefits with their mentor, and understand the requirements for a particular fellowship.

4. What have the panelists found to be the benefits of careers in epidemiology versus other disciplines within public health?

Epidemiologists determine what kind of person has a given disease, while clinicians ascertain what disease a given person has. These roles are very complementary and critical in this age of accountability. Epidemiology is beneficial for the analytically inclined and does provide opportunities to work with others in the field. Students with an interest in other disciplines may find it more advantageous to understand the foundation and applicability of epidemiology to health issues and further enhance their studies in areas including but not limited to, health policy, environmental health, or health promotion.



5. How can you obtain public health training without detracting from medical school, particularly as a first year medical student?

Students can obtain public health training as a first year medical student by participating in a summer project or internship, or volunteering with a student health organization or student-run clinic. Students may also consider rotations within public health departments at the state and county level and other international fellowship opportunities as they progress through medical school.

Students interested in MD-MPH programs can explore opportunities at their own school or one-year MPH programs at schools or programs in public health outside of their university system. A directory of MD-MPH programs is available here: www.aamc.org/students/mdmph.

Third- and fourth-year medical students can gain public health experience in a developing country through participation in the CDC-Hubert Global Health Fellowship. Hubert Global Health Fellows spend 6- to 12-weeks working on an international public health project where they are mentored by experienced CDC staff and learn through hands-on experience. More information about the CDC-Hubert Global Health Fellowship can be found at: www.cdc.gov/HubertFellowship.

For an introduction to preventive medicine, public health, and the principles of applied epidemiology while working at the CDC, fourth-year students can participate in the CDC Epidemiology Elective Program. CDC Epidemiology Elective students learn through hands-on experience working on a current public health project and are mentored by experienced CDC staff. More information about the CDC Epidemiology Elective Program can be found at: www.cdc.gov/EpiElective.

Preventive medicine is the medical specialty devoted to public health that is recognized by the American Board of Medical Specialties. Residency programs in preventive medicine are listed here: <http://bit.ly/1kj9DDo>.

Some preventive medicine residencies are combined with other clinical residency programs and are listed here: www.theabpm.org/combtrng.cfm.

Upon completion of clinical training, the National Health Service Corps provides an opportunity to better understand and apply population health principles by practicing in underserved communities in collaboration with primary care medical, dental, and mental and behavioral health professionals to address social determinants of health.

6. If your public health interests and medical specialty do not directly relate, how do you integrate them?

Public health and clinical practice are complementary regardless of specialty. Public health includes healthcare system issues like healthcare financing, health policy, and evidence-based practice guidelines that are relevant to all specialties. Physicians who interact directly with patients can appreciate the impact of the determinants of health on individual patients and their communities. For example, if you are interested in pediatrics and asthma, understanding diagnosis and treatment is critical to the management of asthma. In addition, understanding the community-level risk factors such as pollution and rodent infestation can help the provider approach the individual patient as well as the collective patient population. Engaging your specialty organization in relevant public health issues can be one method of integrating your public health interests with your clinical field. Joining local or national public health organizations or becoming familiar with your local board of health are other opportunities to engage in public health issues.

7. Where can you learn more about how public health can be included in physician education and training?

AAMC's MedEdPORTAL iCollaborative Public Health Collection

(www.mededportal.org/icollaborative/about/initiatives/publichealth) has a variety of informative resources, including:

- The slide set, "Understanding Public Health in Medical Education"
www.mededportal.org/icollaborative/resource/627
- The video associated with the American Journal of Preventive Medicine supplement, Patients and Populations: Public Health in Medical Education
www.mededportal.org/icollaborative/resource/925

Integrating Public Health in Health Professions Education: A Resource List for Students, Educators and Health Professionals

www.cdc.gov/learning/local/pdf/PH-education-resource-list.pdf