



**AAMC-CDC Cooperative Agreement Webinar Series:
Inclusion and Integration of Population Health into Undergraduate Medical Curriculum**

Frequently Asked Questions
Live Webinar: June 26, 2014

This document is a list of questions and answers from the webinar to assist medical faculty, public health professionals, curriculum deans, and learners with understanding how to overcome barriers to improving the integration of a population health perspective in undergraduate medical education.

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Increasing Public Health Awareness across the Institution

1. What is the difference between population health and public health?

Many leaders in the field use the words interchangeably, some leaders prefer one term more than the other, and others assign different connotations and contexts to the words. Population health is typically defined as the health outcomes of a group of individuals, including the distribution of such outcomes within the group.¹ Public health is often defined as the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organized efforts and informed choices of society, organizations, public and private, communities and individuals.²

2. How do we get more students interested in studying population health, particularly those who are not interested in primary care or do not think population health is relevant to their careers?

Allocating institutional resources that support the development of community health partnership programs, student-run health clinics, or public health/preventive medicine interest groups may increase student interest in population health. Other methods to increase student interest may include integrating population health within the presentation of basic science curricula and including specialty relevant public and population health content during clerkships. For future sustainability across the medical education continuum, further exploration of changes to the graduate medical education curriculum to incorporate population health training should also be considered.

3. How do we recruit faculty and deans to support the integration of population health and preventive medicine into the curriculum when they do not seem to be interested?

The webinar panelists suggested that one way to gain support across the institution was to engage faculty members outside of medicine, such as professors of anthropology, sociology, law, and journalism to educate medical students in population health through non-traditional lectures, such as small-group discussions. Providing faculty development and population health training opportunities for current medical school faculty members who are interested in population health and leading small-group discussions on this subject is also helpful.

Some other suggestions highlighted in the webinar include:

- Avoid sending formal memos via e-mail when recruiting, and instead learn who is already engaged in population health and contact them individually via phone, informal meeting, or e-mail; these individuals will often provide one or two more of their colleagues who are also interested
- Allow for ongoing faculty development within the specialties
- Involve residents, because the medical students often look up to them

¹ Kindig DA, Stoddart G. What is population health? *AM J Public Health* 2003;93(3):380-383.

² Winslow CA. The untilled fields of public health. *Science* 1920;1306:23-33.



4. How do we prepare faculty without training in this area to teach students about population health?

Faculty members who would like additional training in population health can enhance their knowledge and skills by participating in professional development opportunities, training offsite with community health partners, and completing supplementary coursework. The AAMC-CDC Cooperative Agreement sponsors the MedEdPORTAL Public Health Collection of online educational resources, including a [CE Directory](#). It is also advantageous for faculty members to review their course presentations and teaching materials to determine how the topics can be revised to include everyday examples that speak to population health.

5. How do we integrate population health into undergraduate medical education when there are few examples and they are all different?

Because medical school curricular structures vary, there are different examples of how population health has been integrated into undergraduate medical education. Additional information about the programs discussed in the webinar can be found [here](#).

One common theme discussed by the presenters is that institutions must partner with community members and other health professionals in order to truly be effective and create sustainable programming to ensure that all students – not just those interested in primary-care – are well-equipped to address individual patient and community needs. Making phone calls and arranging one-on-one meetings with community members, organizations, and local policymakers helps to build relationships and create experiential learning opportunities for students with community partners.

Schools can also examine their mission statement to consider whether institutional priorities, culture, and programming support key principles of population health.

6. How should medical schools be evaluated and held accountable for their contribution to population health outcomes and health equity?

Population health education efforts can be assessed among the faculty, students, community, and at the institutional level. Some evaluation methods to consider include:

- Developing population health related institutional metrics that are aligned with the mission of the institution to discern whether programming and education efforts are improving community health outcomes
- Creating student, faculty, and community evaluations to measure knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions of population health curricula and outcomes
- Tracking and measuring students who have indicated an interest in incorporating population health into their specialty choice
- Tracking the number of public health and/or population health courses in the curriculum as well as the number of faculty who participate in community engagement programs to help foster relationships

Encouraging the Inclusion of Public Health into Undergraduate Medical Education

1. Who are the champions in medical institutions for encouraging and sustaining the inclusion of population health into undergraduate medical education?

Students and faculty can serve as catalysts of change. If a student or faculty member recruits other colleagues who are interested in population health, they can consider approaching the institution's director of medical education and leadership team to discuss how to provide opportunities for students to learn more about public health during their undergraduate medical education training. The ['Understanding Public Health in Medical Education'](#) slide set provides an overview of the relationship between medicine and public health and can help inform discussions with leadership.

Students and faculty should avoid re-inventing the wheel and research how other schools are incorporating public health into their curricula to determine how they can leverage similar methods and provide students with a more robust education that better prepares them to enter the workforce and address individual and community needs. Two potential resources which highlight examples of integrating population health within medical education include:

- April 2008 Population Health Education issue of Academic Medicine
- October 2011 American Journal of Preventive Medicine supplement, "Patients and Populations: Public Health in Medical Education."

All of the articles in these issues can also be found in the [iCollaborative](#) section of the MedEdPORTAL Public Health Collection.

2. How do we evaluate students in the discipline of population health?

Some schools that have been successful in incorporating population health into their curricula choose to assess their students' learning through examinations, whereas other schools have not implemented a formal assessment. Many schools have also found that it is important to include core objectives of population health and prevention into students clinical skill-set testing, such as using Objective Structured Clinical Examinations.

3. How do we reinforce the teaching of population health concepts in clinical practice?

There are many different ways to reinforce the teaching of population health concepts in clinical practice, including but not limited to:

- Developing evaluation forms that include questions for faculty that ask if they are observing the students employing public health behaviors
- A continuous review of students' feedback and/or reflections on their experiences at clinical sites to discern which methods are most effective with their learning
- Providing more community- and practice-based learning opportunities allowing students to see the relevance of the concepts they are learning
- The inclusion and integration of population health into graduate medical education to further highlight the significance of population health across the continuum