Degree Programs in Public Health: A Canadian Perspective

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Range of Degree Programs Offered in Public Health

Undergraduate

- Bachelor of Science (BSc) but relatively few.

Graduate

- Master of Public Health (MPH), professional degree
- Doctorate of Public Health (Dr. PH), professional degree
- Doctorate of Science (Dr. Sc)
- Master of Science (MSc), research degree
- Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD), research degree
- Joint degrees offered in conjunction with another discipline (MD, MBA)
Graduate Programs

Features and Benefits

- full time and part time → flexible
- on campus or at a distance → accessible
- practicum placements → practical application
- diverse student groups → rich learning environment
- acquire advanced knowledge and skills → become well prepared to apply knowledge/skills
- exposure to senior managers/public health practitioners → networking and mentoring opportunities
Degree programs in Public Health

- Interdisciplinary preparing generalists and specialists
- Strong focus on leadership, and science integration
- Address professional needs but also research oriented training
- Linkages to the public health practice at community and policy levels
- Address both new and current public health practitioners
Degree programs in Public health

• Increasing emphasis on
  – healthy public policy
  – complexity/systems theory/solutions
  – leadership/partnership/communication/negotiation/global diplomacy skills
  – macro economics
  – global health

• Strengthening a culture of knowledge translation
Context for the Contribution of Degree Programs in Public Health

Results of the survey of international needs in training for CVD prevention

Some areas of need:

• Strategies to address social and broader determinants of CVD
• Monitoring and evaluating programs for effectiveness
• Leadership skills for CVD prevention
• Program design and implementation
• Social marketing of prevention messages…..

(National Forum Survey, December 8-19, 2008)
Many of the needs identified are generic public health knowledge and skills included in the core competencies defined by various national and international organizations.
Canada’s Core Competencies in Public Health
(Public Health Agency of Canada, 2008)

Competencies - Essential knowledge skills and attitudes necessary to practice public health:

Seven categories - 36 core competencies

1. **Public Health Sciences** – (1.4 Use evidence & research to inform health policies & programs)

2. **Assessment & Analysis** – (2.4 Analyze information to determine appropriate implications uses, gaps, & limitations)

3. **Policy & Program Planning** – (3.6 Evaluate an action, policy or program)
Canada’s Core Competencies in Public Health
(Public Health Agency of Canada, 2008)

Seven categories (continued)

4. Partnerships, Collaboration & Advocacy

5. Diversity & Inclusiveness – (5.1 Recognize how the determinants of health influence the health & well-being of specific population groups)

6. Communication – (6.3 Mobilize individuals & communities by using appropriate media, community resources & social marketing techniques)

7. Leadership – (7.6 Contribute to team & organizational learning to advance public health goals)
What can Canada contribute?

- Graduate degree programs in public health
- 14 universities offer public health related programs
- 6 Schools of public health

Map showing the distribution of public health programs across Canada:
- **Schools of public health**
- **Public health related programs**

Legend:
- **Stars** represent Schools of public health
- **Numbers** indicate the number of public health related programs in each region.
Schools of Public Health offers a greater breadth of specialised streams of applied public health training

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Core courses generally include…

- Biostatistics
- Epidemiology
- Environmental health
- Health policy
- Socio-behavioural foundations
- Research methodology
Degree programs do not focus specifically on CVD or NCD prevention, but many opportunities in these areas are available through:

- Courses in epidemiology, health promotion
- Master’s thesis
- Community / field experience
- Practica
- Summer institutes
School of Public Health – U of A

• Formed in March 2006; first school of public health in Canada; Pan Alberta public health coalition

• An independent faculty

• Graduate programs with 8 core streams, interdisciplinary research programs, and community engagement
Partnership Agreements

Applied Research

• Healthy Alberta Communities
  – Demonstration project of the Country-wide Integrated Non-Communicable Disease Intervention Programme (WHO-CINDI)
Partnership Agreement

Applied Research

ADDITION & MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH LABORATORY
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH
Partnership Agreements

Training

• Training-Alberta Health services – public health leadership courses as part of continuing education

• Training-Joint Indigenous Summer Research Institute
  – John Hopkins School of Public Health, Health Canada, and the US Department of Health and Human Services

• Training-International collaborative partnership
  – Makerere University, Uganda, other MOUs under development
Our Collective Futures

- Limited resources globally
- Collaboration and partnership
- Seamless system of training through distributed learning network…
- Virtual public health campus
Some Promising initiatives that can lead to degrees and expand global capacity

• Virtual Campus for Public Health
  – Internet based e-learning
    • U Alberta, U Waterloo
  – Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)
    • Europe, Latin America and the United States
  – Peoples Open Access Education Initiative
  – Skills on-line – Public Health Agency of Canada
Some Promising Initiatives in Chronic Disease Prevention

Legend
- Center of Excellence Country
- Developed Country Partner
- Administrative Coordinating Center
Thank you