



Albania to Zimbabwe: A Decade of Diverse Opportunities at the Rollins School of Public Health

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Background

- 95% of global MPH students at the Rollins School of Public Health (RSPH) complete a practicum summer field experience (SFE) between their first and second years.
- School-sponsored funding sources require students to submit a research/project proposal.
- Since 2004 RSPH has surveyed students to monitor, evaluate, and improve SFEs.
- Purpose: to describe breadth and scope of this practicum experience.

Methods

Respondents:

- are in global academic programs (global health, global epidemiology, and global environmental health), or
- receive funding from the Global Field Experience (GFE) fund or the Global Health Institute (GHI).

After achieving a 90%+ response rate through an online survey we prepared reports, including financial and health and safety reports, for stakeholders.

We used linear regression and analysis of variance to analyze the data in SAS.

Results

Number participating: doubled from 68 in 2004 to 148 in 2013

Average length: 10 weeks

Location: 85 countries. Proportion staying in U.S. increased from 13% in 2004 to 29% in 2013 (p=0.016).

Other regions: 30% in Sub-Saharan Africa, 3% in the Middle East & North Africa, 3% in Europe, 9% in Central America & the Caribbean, 6% in South America, and 16% in Asia.

Organizations: 370+ organizations. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (15%, 2011-2013).

Thesis: 31% create their own project (2011 - 2013). 50% use SFE data for their thesis.

Topics: community health & development, infectious disease, reproductive health, environmental health, behavioral sciences, and nutrition, non-communicable diseases, water and sanitation, maternal & child health, abortion, mental health, adolescent health, faith & health, geriatrics, health systems reconstruction, emergency preparedness, humanitarian emergencies, health economics, health technology, and others.

Languages: Using a foreign language increased from 51% to 74% (p=0.112).

Satisfaction: 79% of students were satisfied or very satisfied with their SFE.

Value: 85% rated their SFE as valuable or very valuable.

Discussion

- We have used students' experiences, satisfaction, and perceptions of value as a guide to improving student practicums.
- Foreign language skills often provide an advantage.
- Survey findings are used to recruit students, to develop health and safety training activities, to guide funding decisions, to inform IRB procedures, and to guide students on how to find and develop practicum opportunities.
- Limitations of the survey include a lack of continuity in some questions and in the inclusion criteria from year to year.
 - We also lack comparison with field experience programs at other schools of public health.

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