

SEAMEO TROPMED PHILIPPINES: COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES MANILA

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The SEAMEO TROPMED Philippines, based in the University of the Philippines Manila, College of Public Health (UPM-CPH), is the regional center for Public Health, Hospital Administration, and Environmental and Occupational Health. The center, established in 1967, conducts academic training and research as well as provides technical consultancy and extension services in these 3 disciplines. There are 49 full-time faculty members, of whom 20 have doctoral degrees. Recently, 7 professors from universities and 2 experts from the industry outside the Philippines joined the faculty complement as Visiting and Adjunct Professors, respectively.

ACADEMIC SERVICES

Academic training in the areas of Public Health, Hospital Administration and Environmental and Occupational Health is provided through the academic degree programs and short courses offered by the College of Public Health. At present, there are 9 degree programs, of which one is undergraduate (BS Public Health), six masters (Master of Public Health, Master of Science in Public Health, Master of Hospital Administration, Master of Occupational Health, Master of Science in Epidemiology, and Master of Arts in Health Policy Studies), one diploma (Diploma in Dental Public Health), and one doctoral program (Doctor of Public Health).

Academic improvement activities are continuously being undertaken by UPM-CPH in order to enhance the academic programs and to ensure that they are relevant and responsive to the needs of the graduates and of the community. In 2013, all the academic programs underwent desktop-assessment using the Asia University Network (AUN) Quality Assurance Assessment tool, and in 2014, formal evaluation of academic programs was initiated with support from the Academic Program Improvement Funds of the University of the Philippines System. In 2015, the Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) approach to teaching and learning was adopted by all the academic programs.

The social relevance of the various academic curricula in both graduate and undergraduate programs is being enhanced by the implementation of institutionalized community projects in the college. The first of such projects is the Community Health Development Project that was made possible through the GTZ-SEAMEO-UPM/CPH Partnership. The project which ran from 1982-1998, was developed and implemented as a field training laboratory for undergraduate and graduate public health students. Graduating students were assigned in barangays (villages) for 4-6 weeks during which time they plan and implement public health projects and activities in partnership with the local government. In 2013, the field

practice for the graduate students was redesigned from a barangay level activity to a regional level whereby students became involved in program level activities of the Department of Health. This provided opportunity for the students to get exposure to high level program planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The project was well received by both the students and the Department of Health. Top officials of the Department of Health are among the reactors during the plenary sessions on the field practice accomplishments.

The UPM-CPH has always been a trailblazer in educational approaches in Public Health, including Distance Education (DE), modular approach to teaching, Blended Learning mode, and online-courses. During the mid-90s, Distance Education (DE) was implemented. There were two graduate programs offered in DE mode, namely, the DE-Master of Public Health and DE-Master of Hospital Administration that were launched in 1995 and 1996, respectively. The DE started out as an off-campus offering with Learning Centers established in various areas of the country. The teleconferencing part of the DE program was initiated through a collaborative project on Human Resource Development in Underserved Rural Communities between UPM-CPH and the Memorial University of Newfoundland in Canada under the SEAMEO-CIDA Cooperation Programme. The offering of DE program was a response to the demand for health professionals to update and upgrade their knowledge and skills in Public Health and Hospital Administration without having to leave their homes and employment places.

During the academic year 1998-1999, the MS Epi program was conducted utilizing the modular approach. In this

approach, modules were used in place of the usual courses in a regular program. Each module lasted one to five weeks depending on the number of units assigned to the course. Each module was regarded as a short course and the participants had the option to select courses they would like to take. The modular program was participated by four universities: College of Public Health, UP Manila, Free University of Berlin (Germany), Mahidol University (Thailand) and Khon Kaen University (Thailand).

In 2013, Blended Learning mode was offered in the MHA program which combines face-to-face session in a physical classroom and online classrooms. The BL mode intends to make MHA available to more students outside the island of Luzon and to other hospital administrators who cannot afford to be out of their workplace for long periods of time.

In 2015, an online course in Research Methods was delivered for the first time on a pilot basis with 7 participants. A formative evaluation is currently being undertaken to determine which part of the training program works and which ones need improvement.

Aside from continuing enhancement of the academic programs, building the capacity of the teaching staff has been one of the priorities of UPM-CPH. During the past year, several trainings and workshops were organized for the teaching and research staff covering a wide range of topics, namely, curriculum evaluation, outcomes-based education, development of learning outcomes and instructional designs, health research ethics, and coaching and mentoring.

Expanding collaboration with universities abroad is also actively being pursued by UPM-CPH. Experts in Public

Health from partner universities come to the college to deliver public lectures on up-to-date and relevant PH topics. There are also students from the collaborating universities who come to UPM-CPH to either enroll in regular courses or participate in field practice courses. The Certificate course in International Health Practice Program (CIHP) of Boston University has chosen UPM-CPH as one of its several sites and their students have been coming yearly for several years now.

UPM-CPH has also participated in a student mobility program, organized by SEAMEO TROP MED Network, wherein it acted as a host to graduate students from the Institute for Medical Research (IMR) in Malaysia and the Center of Excellence for Antibody Research (CEAR) in Thailand. At the same time, one student each was sent to IMR and CEAR.

RESEARCH

The center undertakes both basic and applied researches to contribute to growth and knowledge and technology, on the one hand, but also to influence public policy and practice, on the other. Topics of interest include air quality, water safety, occupational risk factors and occupational diseases; prevention and control of communicable and non-communicable diseases (this latter includes injuries, mental health and dental problems); climate change and its health and environmental impacts; human resource management; and health systems. Methodologies utilized in these researches are also diverse, ranging from bench researches, to epidemiologic, health service, and social science researches.

Between 2012 and 2015, a total of 92 new research projects were implemented by the faculty and professional staff of the

center (or about 30 new researches per year), while undergraduate and graduate students contribute an additional 20 new researches annually.

Research productivity of the College is also indicated by the publication in national and international, indexed, peer-reviewed journals. For the period 2012 to 2015, about 40 papers were published annually from the College of Public Health, translating to a *per capita* output of almost one paper per faculty. The average citations per paper is 67 with an h-index of 2, based on data from Google Scholar.

With the growing movement for evidence-based policy and decision-making, research impact today is also being measured in terms of social utility, and the center is proud to be a partner of the Philippine Department of Health and Department of Science and Technology in generating knowledge for policy development at the national level. Highlighted below are some of the research outputs that influenced the direction of the country's health agenda and program.

The Department of Environmental and Occupational Health completed a paper on policy alternatives to reduce the health and economic effects of continued asbestos use in the Philippines, which served as basis for the Philippine government to enact regulatory mechanisms to phase out use of asbestos in the country. Another notable research undertaking by the department was its involvement in the generation of evidence that pollution of Laguna de Bay, the largest lake and one of primary sources of freshwater fish in the country, has resulted to bioaccumulation of heavy metals in freshwater fish, which poses a carcinogenic risk among those ingesting it.

The Department of Epidemiology and

Biostatistics and the Department of Health Policy and Administration, meanwhile, have contributed to evaluation of health projects, programs and services in both the public and private sector, as well in the production of landmark papers on burden of disease. An on-going research on health policy is the assessment of the implementation of primary health care in the Philippines, commissioned to guide the Department of Health in steering the country towards universal health care.

In the Department of Health Promotion and Education, results of multiple collaborative researches on drowning injury were taken up by the World Health Organization Western Pacific Regional Office in the design of prevention intervention in the region.

With assistance from, and collaboration with, Japanese counterparts, the Department of Medical Microbiology served as the Philippine reference hub for leptospirosis prevention and control. This role became more significant following several incidents of flash flooding in various parts of the country, which exposed vulnerable populations to leptospires.

Finally, the UPM-CPH Department of Parasitology is the main partner of the Department of Health in the design and evaluation of policies and programs related to schistosomiasis, malaria, soil-transmitted helminthiasis, vector control, and other neglected tropical diseases.

This partial listing of research productivity highlights the center's role to contributing to health systems development at the domestic and regional levels.

EXTENSION SERVICES

UPM-CPH takes pride in providing an array of professional, scientific and

technical services to the community. Many faculty members serve as technical experts for the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development (PCHRD), an agency that provides financial support for research projects. Services include assessment of the technical soundness of both research proposals submitted to the agency for funding and research reports of funded researches. In addition, faculty members serve as resource persons in the research capacity-building activities of PCHRD and other health agencies of government, namely the Department of Health, Research Institute for Tropical Medicine and the Philippine Traditional and Alternative Health Care. The other services provided by UPM-CPH are diagnostics for certain microbiological and parasitological diseases, indoor air quality monitoring, and chemical and biological analysis of environmental samples.

In addition, UPM-CPH offers continuing education for medical and public health professionals both local and international through conduct of short courses. Annually, about 53 short courses are conducted by the college. In 2015, there were 55 short courses which were participated by a total of 2,828 individuals, among them, the *International and Local Postgraduate Course in Occupational Health and Safety*, the *Certification Course for Water Refilling Station and Plant Operators*, *Regional Course on Advanced Epidemiology*, *Statistical Methods for Health Professionals Using STATA*, *Qualitative Research Methods*, *Executive Course in Hospital Administration*, *Postgraduate Training Course in Diagnostic Mycology*, *Course on Food Safety and the Intensive Training Course on Diagnostic Parasitology*. Described below are some of the short courses that are being offered annually for the past several years now.

Dangerous Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment Program (DDAFTP) Training Course

UPM-CPH, in partnership with the Department of Health and in Collaboration with the Group for Addiction Psychiatry of the Philippines (GAPP) and the Philippine College of Addiction Medicine (PCAM), conducts this two-week course on a yearly basis. This is a basic training course for Physicians and Rehabilitation Workers focusing on the Assessment and Management of Drug Dependence. Six courses have been conducted with a total of 150 participants.

Infectious Disease Control Training (IDCT).

For more than seven years, UPM-CPH has been conducting Infectious Disease Control Training Course for Japanese medical residents in partnership with the National Institute of Public Health, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of the Japanese government. This course focuses on realistic and practical aspects of infectious diseases control, including field visits in public health agencies and infectious disease specialty hospitals.

Municipal Leadership and Governance Program (MLGP).

The MLGP, borne out of a successful pilot program of Zuellig Family Foundation (ZFF), is designed for mayors and Municipal Health Officers (MHO). UPM-CPH serves as the Academic Partner of ZFF which is responsible for the training component of the program. As of February 2016, 42 municipal mayors and MHOs have been trained.

National Sanitarian Training Course (NSTC).

The National Sanitarian Training

Course is a six-month training course for Sanitary Inspectors. The course covers modules that are relevant to the work and practice of Sanitary Inspector and is being offered by UPM-CPH in partnership with the Department of Health. This course has been ongoing for more than 20 years now.

Public Health Emergency Management in the Asia and the Pacific (PHEMAP) Training Course.

The PHEMAP is jointly offered by UPM-CPH and the Health Emergency Management Bureau of the Department of Health. This is a two-week course and has been ongoing for several years now with a total of 18 courses conducted. It aims to enhance the capacity of health emergency managers to enable them to manage emergencies efficiently.

Aside from short courses, UPM-CPH also conducts public lectures. International speakers and visiting or adjunct professors give updates on recent trends and developments on specific public health issues. Among the recent public lectures include "*Asbestos: Health Effects and Controversies of its Carcinogenicity*", "*Introduction to Social Epidemiology*", "*The Economics of Inclusive Growth*" and "*Nutrigenomics: A Public Health Perspective*".

The UPM-CPH as a SEAMEO TROPMED Regional Center will continue to prepare professionals for public health roles and to produce socially-relevant researches as it strives to achieve its vision as a Center *of Excellence and Leadership* in public health in Asia strategically responsive to national and global development.