

MPH MEMOS

University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Fall 2008

Issue 1

Professional and Personal Reflections from an Alumnus

In June of 2007, my sister-in-law—who lives in Peru—was diagnosed with inoperable, non-small cell lung cancer with five metastatic tumors in her brain. Since then, I have had the privilege to be with her several times while she underwent chemotherapy, radiation, and experimental treatments, in addition to reflexology, healing prayers, and special diets. Concurrent treatment: an outpouring of love from friends and family. Even though her physicians said two months ago that her body could not withstand any more treatments, she is still enjoying her family, going out for car rides, laughing, and talking—saying all those things we sometimes would like to say to one another. And there are difficult times—rebellion, suspicion, anxiety, urgency, and sadness—that require humongous, heartfelt hugs and kisses.

Last month, I had the opportunity to work as a simultaneous Spanish interpreter for SECCAM 2008, which is the first gathering of Catholic AIDS ministers working in the southeast. This year's theme: God entrusts us to one another. I heard testimonies from ministers, as well as from those affected and/or infected by the virus.

What do these experiences have to do with the profession of health educator? They have taught me the value of being fully present, keenly aware, eternally in the now, and continually educated. In short, the lesson is this: Our profession can come alive, whether it is in a formal or an informal setting. I was reading aloud *My Left Foot* (the 1954 autobiography of Christy Brown, an Irish author, painter and poet who had cerebral palsy) to my sister-in-law. Slowly, profoundly, I got inside the story and started gesturing with my foot, my hands, with a special intonation in my voice. I became mesmerized with the story, and did not notice when others came into the room. As I paused and looked up, I saw seven other people, also mesmerized, listening attentively to this marvelous testimony of life.

Through all of this—and through the mutual sharing and support that I experienced with my colleagues and professors in the MPH program at UT—I remain convinced that “it is in giving that we receive.”

Jeannine De La Torre Ugarte, MPH
Community Health Educator
Spanish Translator and Interpreter

Dates to Remember

Sept 19 – Dr. Jon Oberlander, “Health care reform and the Presidential candidates’ positions,” Hodges Aud, 10 am

Sept 22 – Graduation fee due

Sept 24 – Dr. Craig Gundersen, “Food Insecurity, Stress, and Childhood Overweight,” Black Cultural Center, 9 am

Oct 9-10 Fall Break (No Classes)

Oct 21 – “Sick around the World” documentary explores healthcare systems globally, Hodges Aud, 7-8 pm

Oct 23 – purchase cap and gown; register to attend graduate hooding

Oct 25-29 – Meeting of the American Public Health Association, San Diego

Nov 7 – Comprehensive Exam, beginning at noon (HPER 390)

Nov 27-28 – Thanksgiving (No Classes)

Dec 4-5, 8-11 – Final Exam Period

Dec 12 – Graduate Hooding

Next CHES Exam

Interested in becoming a Certified Health Education Specialist? Register now for the exam on April 25, 2009, at www.nchec.org/.

Welcome, New Students!

The MPH program welcomes 23 new students who began this summer or fall. Related to concentrations of study, 10 of the new students are Community Health Education (CHE), nine are Health Planning & Administration (HPA) and four are Veterinary Public Health (VPH). For fall semester, 71 students are enrolled in the MPH program.

MPH Program Accreditation Extended to July 1, 2015

The Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) in late June officially notified the MPH Program that accreditation has been extended for seven years, which is the maximum term possible. Their report also noted the existence of two vacant faculty positions and requested that the program identify three full-time program faculty for each MPH degree concentration area by late spring 2009.

A set of 26 criteria is used by the Council as national standards for reviewing the quality and consistency of professional preparation offered by MPH programs. Of these criteria, 23 are applicable for the UT program with 19 judged by a site visit team as fully met, two met with commentary, and two partially met. During the site visit in late October 2007, the team interviewed students, alumni, preceptors, community representatives, faculty and administrators to gain their perceptions of the program.

Accreditation was first achieved in 1969 with the Tennessee MPH program becoming the first outside a school of public health to receive this recognition. Since 1969, the program has been successful in securing extensions of accreditation through a self-study and review process that requires approximately two years to complete.

Change in Departmental Affiliation

Effective July 1, 2008 the MPH program and other health and safety programs were administratively assigned to the Department of Nutrition and identified as "Programs in Public Health." Faculty and programs will remain in the HPER facilities on Andy Holt Avenue and will report to the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences through the Department of Nutrition. Dr. Jay Whelan is the department head. A major basis for the change in departmental oversight is the long-standing relationship between the MPH program and the Department of Nutrition, especially the graduate public health nutrition program. Importantly, this action is viewed as a preliminary step toward establishing a department of public health, which is a goal of the College.

Congratulations

Major Dwayne Bechtol, DVM, a student in the Veterinary Public Health concentration of the MPH program, recently passed the certifying examination for the American College of Veterinary Preventive Medicine. A warm congratulations to Dwayne on this accomplishment.

Graduates for 2007-08

During the past academic year, 26 students were awarded the MPH degree and four in public health nutrition were awarded the dual MS-MPH degree. Our best wishes to all of these graduates!

Share your news in MPH Memos! We want to know about your internship, presentations, conferences attended, events, and projects. The next issue of MPH Memos will appear in October, so contact me soon at woodsash@hotmail.com. Woods Nash, Editor, MPH Memos.