



## Federal Participation at the Third Annual Summer Institute

The 2006 Summer Institute, held at the University of Texas School of Public Health July 10-14 2006, attracted participants throughout Texas at all levels of government. Three Federal employees from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Office of Performance Review (OPR), Dallas Regional Division attended the Managing Public Health Emergencies intensive learning track. The Summer Institute offered a valuable opportunity for the HRSA employees to participate in training related to emergency preparedness in Texas.

Both civilian and non-civilian HHS employees may be called upon to assume supplemental roles during



(L-R) Capt Angel Rodriguez-Espada, Lauren Spears, and Jeff Jordan

a disaster. U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps Officers are assigned to Federal, State or local agencies or international organizations and are always on call to respond to public health emergencies. In addition to deployment of Commissioned Corps Officers, civilian employees within HHS may also be called upon to respond to public health emergencies.

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## Health Informatics Education in Texas

Health informatics promises to play a significant role in the daunting tasks of reducing health care costs and improving health care quality – issues of crucial interest to public health professionals. Health informatics cuts across three enormous broad fields of study: computer and information sciences, medicine and biology, and health care. The discipline that results from this intersection provides health professionals with the tools they need to modernize the health enterprise with applications such as electronic medical records, computerized physician order entry, telemedicine, outcomes reporting and evidence-based hospital referral. And these applications are just the tip of the iceberg of potential. As one subset within this vast and emerging discipline, public health informatics focuses on the application of powerful health informatics techniques to public health practice and research.

Health informatics in the field requires big doses of highly-skilled and quite scarce expertise. However, Texas universities have risen to the challenge of educating professionals to fill those skill gaps, offering a variety of certificate and

advanced degree programs in health informatics.

The University of Texas School of Health Information Sciences at Houston (UTSHIS) recently announced a certificate program in health informatics. The program, which began Fall 2006, is designed to prepare motivated professionals working in health care with the background needed to play an active role in the implementation of health information technology projects at their institutions. Two options are available to fulfill the course of study: one with a

pre-determined set of five courses stressing clinical informatics; the second permitting choice among courses that the School offers. Those electing the first option can complete the program entirely through distance learning. Anyone with a bachelor's degree may apply for the program and can begin studies in any semester.

The certificate program allows students to build a knowledge base in health informatics and explore their interests and capabilities without committing to a full master's degree. If they wish, certificate completers may later convert the credits they obtain in the program toward a Master's or PhD degree in Health Information Sciences upon acceptance to the degree program. For more information, see: <http://www.shis.uth.tmc.edu/education/certificate-program/certificate-program-overview>. A new certificate program in public health informatics is being offered jointly by UTSHIS and the UT School of Public Health and will appeal to those with an interest targeted toward public health.

The new certificate program joins existing master's and doctoral degree programs with concentrations in various aspects of health informatics at UTSHIS and the University of North Texas School of Public Health. For example, UNT offers a Master of Public Health degree in health informatics at the UNT Fort Worth campus. This program is targeted toward those currently working in clinical professions or public health and who are interested in applying informatics within those settings. More background is available: <http://www.hsc.unt.edu/education/sph/Programs.cfm>. For those with a specific interest in the challenges of managing health information, UNT also offers a highly-regarded Master of Information Sciences degree within its School of Library and Information Sciences. The U.S. News and World Report survey ranked this program 2<sup>nd</sup> in the nation within its field. For more information: [http://courses.unt.edu/acleveland/HI\\_Program/index.html](http://courses.unt.edu/acleveland/HI_Program/index.html)

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# Public Health Practice Grand Rounds

## *Changing Policy, Changing Practice*

### Background

Clinical grand rounds have been used as a training tool in medicine for many decades. In the medical field case histories are utilized to demonstrate clinical presentation of diseases. Medical specialists present their point of view on the different aspects of the patient's status in relation to etiology, diagnosis, treatment protocol and prognosis. The "patient" in Public Health Grand Rounds is the community and the "status" is a public health concern in the community requiring an intervention. In Public Health Grand Rounds, public health specialists present their views on the different aspects of the "patient's status."

Public Health Grand Rounds is a series of live lectures and discussions presenting real-world case studies on public health issues; it is a collaborative effort between the City of Houston Department of Health and Human Services and the department's partners, particularly its academic partners. The chief partner is the University of Texas School of Public Health, Texas Public Health Training Center.

### The Public Health Grand Rounds will:

- Include presentations on new and emerging issues in public health
- Promote a dialogue on the critical nature of public health infrastructure development
- Discuss the need for high-quality and well-organized population-based public health services
- In true "grand rounds" format, the topic is introduced by a state/local health department representative and then followed by an in-depth presentation on the topic by an expert on the subject.
- Improve interactions with agencies and practitioners of public health that will be of benefit for the education and field placements of students
- Incorporate workforce-related issues, research and public health practice.

The first grand rounds held January 10, 2007, "The Association between Hazardous Air Pollutants and Cancer Risk Among Residents of Harris County"

caught the attention of local officials and state regulators. The February presentation, "What Not to Give Your Significant Other for Valentine's Day: Human Papillomavirus and the Vaccine to Protect Against It" also generated discussion among the public and elected officials.



*Public Health Grand Rounds*

The March 14, 2007 Grand Rounds topic, "Tuberculosis" will be available as a live web cast to other health departments and individuals by the Texas Association of Local Health Officials (TALHO) via the Texas Health Alert Network. Register at [www.talho.org](http://www.talho.org).

For more information contact: [nancy.m.crider@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:nancy.m.crider@uth.tmc.edu) or [Cathy.Triosi@cityofhouston.net](mailto:Cathy.Triosi@cityofhouston.net)

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### Federal Participation *continued from page 1*

In 2005, in addition to their roles as regional coordinators and public health analysts in the HRSA OPR Dallas Regional Division, both civilian and non-civilian employees were deployed to respond to needs in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. CAPT Angel Rodriguez-Espada, a Summer Institute participant and regional coordinator in the Dallas Regional Division, led a unit of 109 uniformed health care officers who turned an empty building into a full-service hospital, forming a shelter that housed over 140 patients with a variety of medical needs. Another Summer Institute participant and a public health analyst in the Dallas Regional Division, Jeff Jordan, served as the liaison officer for HRSA grantees in the greater Houston area that were affected by the hurricanes and evacuees accessing HRSA-funded grantee services. The intensive learning tract offered through the Texas Public Health Training Center Summer Institute provided perfect learning and sharing opportunities for the HRSA employees and other Institute participants.

During an emergency, integration of duties at all levels of government occurs. The Summer Institute also offered a tremendous opportunity for local, state, and Federal representatives to share information and establish relationships.

OPR attempts to connect HRSA grantees that may not be aware of each other's services and resources. The knowledge gained through participation at the Summer Institute has been applied to the performance review work carried out on a daily basis in the HRSA OPR Dallas Regional Division by connecting HRSA grantees, such as the Poison Control Centers, to the Texas Public Health Training Center for training, information dissemination, and collaboration with curriculum development.

The HRSA OPR Dallas Regional Division looks forward to participating in future learning opportunities offered through the Texas Public Health Training Center.

**--Lauren Spears, MPH**

*Public Health Analyst*

*HRSA/OPR Dallas Regional Division*

# National Public Health Week 2007

In 1995, former President William Jefferson Clinton proclaimed the first full week of April as National Public Health Week (NPHW). Each year since then the public health community has focused on issues that are important to improving the public's health.

This year's National Health Week theme is "Preparedness and Public Health Threats: Addressing the Unique Needs of the Nation's Vulnerable Populations." The tagline is "Take the First Step!" During the twelfth annual event, APHA will reach out to policy-makers, public health officials and partner groups across the country to empower them to share tools

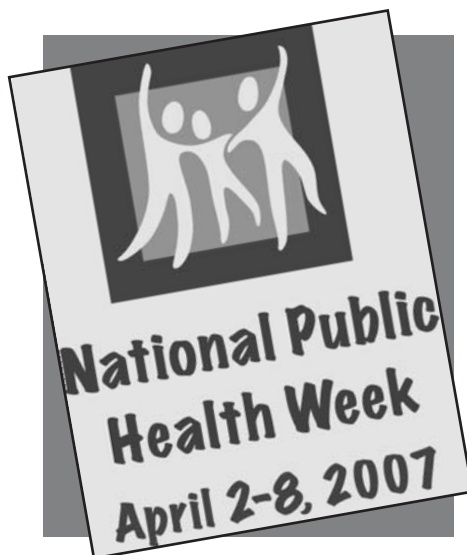
## Research and Data Gathering for the Grant Writing Process

### *Preconference kicks off 82<sup>nd</sup> Annual TPHA Conference*

Sponsored by TPHTC, Helene VonVille, Director of Library Services, University of Texas School of Public Health Library and Michelle Malizia, Public Health Outreach Coordinator, National Network of Libraries of Medicine – South Central Region presented a pre-conference at the 82nd Annual Texas Public Health Association Meeting. The workshop held on February 25, 2007 at the Hotel Galvez on Galveston Island was designed for beginning grant proposal writers. The class presented a general overview of the grant and funding processes as well as the level of detail required in a successful proposal. Various components of the grant writing process were addressed, including: locating funding via the Internet; documenting the need; identifying the target population; writing measurable objectives; developing a work plan, an evaluation plan and dissemination plan. Health care data bases that permit free public access were identified and effective internet search techniques were demonstrated. Participants discussed how evidenced based research and health data can be used to improve public health practice and influence public health policy.

and resources that will enable residents to overcome barriers to create preparedness plans. The week will focus on five core audiences who are vulnerable to health dangers: mothers with young children; local food banks; hourly workers and employees; schools serving children in kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade; and individuals with chronic health needs, such as diabetes, asthma, cancer and high blood pressure.

APHA and its partners are encouraging Americans to "Take the First Step!" and choose one activity as their first step toward becoming better prepared to address a public health threat. Comprehensive planning, organizing and



outreach materials that can be used during and after the week to advance the issue are available at the APHA Website. Please visit [www.nphw.org](http://www.nphw.org) for more information. TPHTC and its partners are also planning special events to celebrate National Public Health Week. Keep a look out for future announcements.

**Nancy Crider, MS**

*The University of Texas School of Public Health, Program Manager TPHTC*

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## Health Informatics *continued from page 1*

UTSHIS offers a rich set of programs that draw on engineering, computer, and biological sciences. The concentration in clinical informatics addresses collection and use of health data for decision-making in the clinical setting. A concentration in computational biomedicine prepares the student to tackle computational problems ranging across the size scale from molecule to man. In a Learning and Technology concentration the student obtains the skills to design and develop optimal health-related learning environments. These programs lead to a Master's or Doctoral degree. These are cutting edge programs that suit the interests of someone who is gratified by technical challenge. More information on these programs is available:

<http://www.shis.uth.tmc.edu/>

**Carol Galeener, PhD**

*The University of Texas School of Public Health*

## 2007 Regional Practice Institutes Announced

In response to suggestions from members of the Texas public health workforce the TPHTC will kick off a series of regional institutes beginning in the spring of 2007. The institutes will be offered across the state and co-sponsored with our academic and practice partners in Austin, Dallas, Bryan-College Station, San Antonio, Brownsville, El Paso and Houston. The goal of the regional practice institutes is to provide the public health workforce intensive skill based training at a location in close proximity to their home community. The institutes will provide attendees with take away skills that they can apply immediately in their workplace. Topics will include the Use of Evidence Based Data in Public Health Practice, Grant Writing; Research and Data Gathering on the Internet; Community Needs Assessments; Program Planning & Evaluation and Public Health Law. Additional topics focused on the Core Competencies for Public Health Practice will be added in the future. Requests for local presentations or suggestions of other relevant topics can be directed to the TPHTC partners by telephone at 713-500-9399 or e-mail [nancy.m.cridner@uth.tmc.edu](mailto:nancy.m.cridner@uth.tmc.edu); [etrevino@hsc.utn.edu](mailto:etrevino@hsc.utn.edu) or [slfgalout@srph.tamhsc.edu](mailto:slfgalout@srph.tamhsc.edu)

## The Librarian's Corner

Margaret Anderson, *Public Services Library, UTSPH*

### Public Health Blogs

Keeping up with current news in public health is difficult as it covers a wide range of topics: healthcare policy, disaster preparedness, epidemiology to name a few. Blogs have emerged as new information channels by providing news, creating discussions, and more. So, just what is a blog? A blog is a contraction for weblog<sup>1</sup>, a type of software that supports a website with interactive diary-like entries to which others can respond<sup>2</sup>. It is one of the most popular new technologies on the web today.

However, just like online resources, the variance in quality and transparency leaves many questioning the value of these sites. The following compilation is a list of blogs that have been evaluated across selected criteria including: transparency, recognition, objectivity, source of funding, and content. Please note that this list is limited to those that are specific to public health and does not include any clinical medicine blogs.

### Healthcare management, policy, and law

- Effect Measure from anonymous senior public health scientists and practitioners (<http://www.scienceblogs.com/effect-measure/>)
- Health Politics from Dr. Mike Magee (<http://www.healthpolitics.org/>)
- Public Health Blog from Louisiana State University Law Center (<http://biotech.law.lsu.edu/blog.htm/>)

**The Texas Public Health Training Center (TPHTC)** is a workforce development consortium of the University of Texas School of Public Health at Houston; the University of North Texas Health Science Center, School of Public Health and the Texas A&M University System Health Science Center, School of Rural Public Health. TPHTC is a formal partner with the UT Center for Biosecurity and Public Health Preparedness. Principal funding for the Center provided through a grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the US Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS).

[www.txphtrainingcenter.org](http://www.txphtrainingcenter.org)

### Disaster Preparedness

- DERA DisasterCom Blog from Disaster Preparedness & Emergency Response Association (<http://www.dera.us/news/>)
- Disaster News Network from Village Life Company (non profit) (<http://www.disasternews.net/blog/>)

### Environment

- Confined Space from Jordan Barab (<http://spewingforth.blogspot.com/>)
- Environmental News Network from Environmental News Network ([www.enn.com](http://www.enn.com))
- Environment Portal and Search Engine from Ecological Internet, Inc (<http://www.ecoearth.info/>)

### Health Promotion and Education

- Health Behavior Blog from Center for the Advancement of Health (<http://www.cfah.org/>)
- Health Marketing Musings Blog from CDC (<http://www.cdc.gov/healthmarketing/blog.htm>)
- RMC Health from Rocky Mountain Center Health Promotion and Education (<http://www.rmc.org/wordpress/?cat=8>)

### Biostatistics

- Social Sciences Statistics Blog from Institute for Quantitative Social Science at Harvard University (<http://www.iq.harvard.edu/blog/sss/>)
- SPSSlog from market researchers (<http://www.spsslog.com/>)

### Epidemiology and Infectious Disease

- APHA Flu Blog by American Public Health Association (<http://getreadyforflu.blogspot.com/>)
- Dr. Buttery's Public Health Blog by CDC (<http://blog.vcu.edu/cbuttery/epidemiology/>)

### References

- 1 Hill, B. (2006). *Blogging for dummies* <http://www.netLibrary.com/urlapi.asp?action=summary&v=1&bookid=148699>
2. Giustini, D. (2006) *How Web 2.0 is changing medicine*. *BMJ* 333:1283-1284. <http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/333/7582/1283>

## Important Public Health Resources

### • Partners in information Access for the Public Health Workforce

*A collaboration of U.S. government agencies, public health organizations and health sciences libraries*

Mission: Helping the public health workforce find and use information effectively to improve and protect the public's health

**Main Topics:** Health Promotion and Health Education, Literature and Guidelines, Health Data Tools and Statistics, Grants and Funding, Education and Training, Legislation and Policy, Conferences and Meetings, Finding People, Discussion and E-mail lists, Jobs and Careers.

To access visit

<http://phpartners.org/index.html>

### Education and Training

#### • Epidemiologic Case Studies

Interactive case study exercises developed to teach epidemiologic principles and practices. They are based on real-life outbreaks and public health problems and were developed in collaboration with the original investigators and experts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

To access cases visit

<http://www2a.cdc.gov/epicasestudies/default.htm>

#### • Public Health Information and Data Tutorial

Provides online instruction for members of the public health workforce on issues related to information access and management. Four modules cover staying informed about news in public health, health education resources, public health statistics and data sets, and supporting decisions with the best evidence.

To access data tutorial visit

<http://phpartners.org/tutorial/index.html>

#### • Public Health Information & Data Tutorial: Health Statistics Module

Online instruction on how to retrieve statistical information and access data sets relevant to public health.

To access module visit

<http://phpartners.org/tutorial/0-hs/index.html>