

Practicum Title: Designing a Community-based Colon Cancer Screening Program to Increase Screening Rates and Affect Policy

Please write a brief description of the organization you will be working with.

I will be working with the Boston Public Health Commission whose mission is to protect the health and well-being of Boston's most vulnerable residents through community-based health, programs, services, advocacy, policy, health promotion, education and emergency services. Boston Public Health Commission aims to conduct all of their programs through a health equity and racial justice lens.

Please write a brief description of the practicum project.

We will design a protocol for a colorectal cancer screening project based on "Flu-Fit". The goal of this project is to increase colorectal cancer screening by providing colorectal cancer education and distributing stool-based tests to interested patients when they receive flu shots. Our design seeks to leverage the flu shot visit as an opportunity to discuss a clinical service that is typically discussed at a patient's annual physical examination. We will interview stakeholders and leaders at local community health centers, pharmacies, and large employer-based health clinics to determine how best to implement and design this program in a way that prioritizes the resources and limitations of each site. We will consider the challenges that were previously faced when implementing similar programs and develop a model that addresses these factors. Another goal, in the policy and advocacy area, will be to impact the "loophole" for colonoscopy coverage in Medicare, the individual market, and some private plans. Currently if a patient presents for colon cancer screening with colonoscopy and they do not have a polyp, their colonoscopy is fully covered and there is only a visit copay to the patient. If the patient has a colonoscopy and a polyp is resected, or they have a colonoscopy after a positive stool test, then it is considered a diagnostic test and the patient must share the cost of the procedure. We will address the policy implications of this work through advocacy and discussions with political leaders.

How is the project of strategic significance to the host organization?

Cancer has been the leading cause of death in Boston since 2002. In 2018, The Boston Public Health Commission released its first ever report on the burden of cancer among city residents: Health of Boston Special Report: Cancer Among City of Boston Residents 1999-2013. In Boston, colorectal cancer is the third leading cause of cancer-related death for both male and female residents, with a disproportionate burden on men of color. BPHC is working with a multidisciplinary team to create a comprehensive cancer secondary prevention plan for the City of Boston. This practicum project will augment BPHC's work in colorectal cancer secondary prevention by creating a blueprint to work with a health center site to determine how to successfully implement an evidence-based Flu/FIT program with limitations in resources and other areas.

What type of orientation or resources will this organization be providing you (e.g. access to equipment, training, etc.)

BPHC will provide an organizational onboarding orientation from HR. Further, through a racial justice and health equity lens, BPHC will provide a public and population health framework for cancer prevention. BPHC will provide workspace and security badge access, along with computer equipment and login, as needed.

How is the project relevant to public health?

Colon cancer screening is a cancer that is preventable with screening, thus it is recommended that all age-appropriate adults should have screening. However, there are significant disparities in screening,

treatment, and mortality in colorectal cancer due to race, socioeconomic status, and other factors. The goal of this project is to improve screening, but also remove some of the barriers to screening in the current policies around insurance coverage.

What type of competencies (e.g. knowledge, skills) do you expect to develop?

Through literature review and interviews with health centers, employer-based health center sites, and advocacy professionals, I hope to learn how community health centers function, how to identify and foster relationships with community partners, how to use community-based program results and findings for advocacy, and how to successfully develop and implement a community based public health program.

Final product or deliverable and due dates:

Final project will be a protocol for implementation of the “Flu Fit” community based colon cancer screening tool that can be expanded to community health centers, pharmacies and through employer based health programs in Massachusetts. We will also make policy recommendations to for bill HR 1570 (the Colorectal Cancer Screening Act) that is currently in committee in the House of Representatives. Final date of this project will be the first week of April 2020.