

Practicum Title: Native American Mortality Trends in the Great Plains – Lessons and Opportunities

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

The MGH RHLFP is a fellowship program based out of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe Indian Health Service Unit that focuses on building rural clinical experiences and skills. There is a specific focus on developing physicians who are competent in rural, low-resourced settings and dedicated to serving marginalized communities. Moreover, the program promotes independent research that is culturally relevant and driven by public health methodologies and theory.

Please write a brief description of the practicum project:

My research project aims to conduct a mixed-methods approach to identify and explore where, why, and how Native American tribes in the Great Plains region are achieving higher compared to lower rates of mortality. In particular, I am analyzing the mortality rates for the top fifteen cause of death, compared across 18 tribes in the Great Plains region. I am identifying trends across and within tribes--specifically tribes that are outperforming compared to underperforming against other tribes and national averages. Tribes are analyzed and identified through quantitative measures. Once specific tribes are identified, I hope to develop a qualitative approach to gather community perspectives, key stake holders' expertise, and community responses to these trends. The ultimate objective of this project is to gain a better understanding of both how particular tribes are confronting and overcoming ongoing health challenges, and how these interventions might be applied more widely to other tribes. In addition, this work will significantly add to the gap in research on Native American health disparities and needs.

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

The RHLFP is interested in this work as they continue to grow and develop a trusting partnership with the local native community and IHS. This work will highlight diseases and health topics that can practically be confronted. In particular, the group is interested in understanding if any of the trends that are identified reflect more preventable diseases that the primary care team might focus their efforts. In addition, in utilizing an asset lens to identify areas of higher performance, the work furthers the organization's goal of repositioning power into native communities.

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

An orientation was done in October to describe the work, and offer me various projects/approaches that I could take. Ongoing face-to-face and phone call meetings have been done to monitor my progress and make any necessary changes to support my learning and interests. No work space or equipment is necessary or provided. There is an opportunity to conduct work on-site at the Rosebud Sioux Tribe Reservation, where housing and transportation would be available.

How is the project relevant to public health?

This work takes an epidemiological approach to exploring and understanding Native American health. Moreover, this project allows for greater learning and application of the MPH Foundational Competencies. This includes utilizing evidence-based approaches to studying and analyzing mortality data; reflecting on the current health system and structural sources of health inequity that have impacted native communities; developing appropriate and culturally-relevant interventions for this population's

health needs; and honing my communication and leadership skills to promote effective collaboration.

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

As mentioned, this project touches all the domains of the foundational competencies. However, specific competencies that I hope to focus on include: (1) ongoing practice with both quantitative and qualitative approaches (for data collection and data analysis), (2) assessment of this population's health needs and strengths within a culturally-relevant context, (3) utilize this information to consider potential population interventions that are feasible within this community's health system, (4) collaborate with key stakeholders and community members to guide data interpretation and next-steps, (5) practice applying different communication skills and approaches that are useful for different audiences (both in writing and in oral presentations), (6) and learn from my mentors to become a more equipped and confident public health practitioner and physician.

Final product or deliverable and due dates:

11/26 -- identification of key trends across disease types and tribes

1/8 -- develop list of key stakeholders and community members

1/24 - complete interviews, gather supporting information to guide next-steps in data analysis

2/28 -- draft manuscript

3/23 -- final draft for presentation and submission to journals