

Public Health Mission

Prevent illness and injury

It costs far less to prevent a health problem than to treat one after it has developed. For example, every dollar spent on immunizations for measles, mumps, and rubella saves \$14.00 in future treatment of vaccine-preventable diseases.

Promote good health practices

Educating the public about health issues is a main goal of public health. Every dollar spent on smoking cessation for pregnant women saves over \$4.00 in tobacco related health costs of mothers and their babies.

Keep the environment clean, healthy, and safe

Protecting the public from environmental hazards is an important public health responsibility. Environmentalists monitor our water, maintain sanitary standards with inspections of restaurants, and deal with animal problems such as control of pests such as rats or mosquitoes.

Public Health Traditions

The government's role in protecting public health goes back over 200 years in the United States. There have been several changes throughout the years.

In 1798, the Marine Hospital Service became the first federal public health program as it provided care for the sick and disabled merchant marines.

During the Civil War, two-thirds of the 360,000 Union fatalities were a result of infectious diseases -- not battle!

From August 31 to September 10, 1854 there were 500 deaths because of Cholera in the Golden Square, a residential area in downtown London. Cholera is a bacterial disease transmitted through ingestion of food or water contaminated with feces or vomits of infected persons. John Snow, who is known as the "Father of the Field of Epidemiology"

Fields of Study

Public Health Environmentalist

Responsible for inspections of facilities and the investigation and resolution of environmental complaints/nuisances/food borne illnesses. Inspects tourist accommodations, schools, swimming pools, and food establishments to ensure compliance with state/local regulations. Reviews plans for onsite sewage systems for residents, institutions and other constructions.

Public Health Nurse

Provides preventative, therapeutic, and restoration nursing care, such as well-child, prenatal, cancer screening, and home health. Teaches the patient/family about the patients care needs and health maintenance measures. Provides intermittent skilled nursing services such as, wound care, catheterization, venipuncture, teaching and evaluation, and patients' response to teaching, injections, I-V therapy and decubitus care. Maintains accurate and timely records and reports according to program standards.

Social Worker

Responsible for social assessments in the clinic/home setting, determining and re-determining eligibility for selected services, counseling clients regarding services available and preparing a treatment plan in conjunction with other professional staff.

Support Staff

Assembles appropriate forms to establish medical record for service staff to record services provided. Responsible for compiling, tabulating, and posting accounting and related data.

Health Education

Identifies and evaluates the community health needs and resources available. Activities consist of public health education/promotion, consultation, outreach, visits to homes/other sites promoting services, scheduling appointments and follow-up services.

Administration

Directs the personnel of a local health department in providing a variety of public health services to the community. Responsible for budget preparation, annual program plans, patient reporting system, and computer application. Works with third party payers for billing and accounts payable according to state/local regulations.

Nutritionist

Responsible for directing and overseeing the nutritional program and services to meet the needs of patients served by the local health department. Develops and evaluates program plans for nutritional programs, such as WIC and Maternal Child Health. Coordinates and schedules nutrition staff to provide appropriate nutrition services based on the needs of individual patients.

Laboratory Technician

Performs tests in medical laboratories for use in treatment and diagnosis of diseases. Collects blood specimens, groups and types of blood, analyzes blood and bloody fluids

for chemical components. Make microscopic examination of urine, blood, blood fluids, and water.

Fun Facts

Facts from the 1500s...

Next time you are washing your hands and complain because the water temperature isn't just how you like it think about how things used to be...

Most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May and still smelled pretty good by June. However, they were starting to smell so brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide the body odor.

Baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all the other sons and men, then the women and children, and finally the babies. By then, the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it, hence the saying, "Don't throw the baby out with the bath water."

Houses had thatched roofs-- thick straw, piled high, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the dogs, cats, and other animals (mice, rats, and bugs). When it rained, it became slippery and sometimes the animals would fall off the roof, hence the saying, "It's raining cats and dogs." There was nothing to stop things from falling into the house. This posed a real problem in the bedroom where bugs and other droppings could really mess up your nice, clean bed. Hence, a bed with big posts and a sheet hung over the top afforded some protection. That's how canopy beds came into existence.

The floor was dirt. Only the wealthy had something other than dirt, hence the saying, "dirt poor."

The wealthy had slate floors that would get slippery in the winter when wet, so they spread thresh on the floor to help keep their footing. As the winter wore on, they kept adding more thresh until when you opened the door it would all start sliding outside. A piece of wood was placed in the entryway, hence a "threshold."

They cooked in the kitchen with a big kettle that always hung over the fire. Every day they lit the fire and added things to the pot. They ate mostly vegetables and did not eat much meat. They would eat the stew for dinner, leaving leftovers in the pot to get cold overnight and then start over the next day. Sometimes the stew had food in it that had been there for quite awhile-- hence the rhyme, "peas porridge hot, peas porridge cold, peas porridge in the pot, nine days old."

Sometimes they could obtain pork, which made them feel quite special. When visitors came over, they would hang up their bacon to show off. It was a sign of wealth that a man could "bring home the bacon." They would cut off a little to share with guests and would all sit around and "chew the fat."

Those with money had plates made of pewter. Food with a high acid content caused some of the lead to leach into the food causing lead poisoning and death. This happened most often with tomatoes, so for the next 400 years or so, tomatoes were considered poisonous. Most people did not have pewter plates, but had trenchers, a piece of wood with the middle scooped out like a bowl. Often trenchers were made from stale paysan bread,

which was so old and hard that they could use them for quite some time. Trenchers were never washed and a lot of time worms and mold got into the wood and old bread. After eating off wormy moldy trenchers, one would get "trench mouth."

Bread was divided according to status. Workers got the burnt bottom of the loaf, the family got the middle, and guests got the top or "upper crust."

Lead cups were used to drink ale or whiskey. The combination would sometimes knock them out for a couple of days. Someone walking along the road would take them for dead and prepare them for burial. They were laid out on the kitchen table for a couple of days and the family would gather round, eat, drink, and wait to see if they would wake up, hence the custom of holding a "wake."

England is old and small and they started running out of places to bury people. So they would dig up coffins and would take the bones to a "bone house" and reuse the grave. When reopening these coffins, one out of 25 was found to have scratch marks on the inside and they realized they had been burying people alive. So they thought they would tie a string on the wrist of the corpse, lead it through the coffin and up through the ground and tie it to a bell. Someone would have to sit out in the graveyard all night "graveyard shift" to listen for the bell; thus, someone could be "saved by the bell" or was considered a "dead ringer."

Public Health helped educate the public and changed these old customs to make people healthier.

Survey

1. From the list below, please choose two careers found in public health.
 - a. actor
 - b. public works
 - c. financial officer
 - d. mechanical engineer
 - e. epidemiologist
 - f. health educator
 - g. chemist

2. From the activities below, which are performed by a public health environmentalist?
 - a. Inspects restaurants
 - b. Assists with animal bites
 - c. Performs septic tank inspections
 - d. Checks blood pressure
 - e. Tests water quality
 - f. Balances bank accounts
 - g. Teaches food safety

3. Which of the following job duties are performed by employees of the public health department?
 - a. Investigating food poisoning outbreaks
 - b. Balancing budgets
 - c. Teaching Family Wellness

- d. Investigating fires/providing security
- e. Teaching Health Education
- f. Providing Patient Services
- g. Performing lab tests
- h. Maintaining local birth and death certificates
- i. Working directly with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on a daily basis

4. Have you or your family ever received services from a health department?

- a. yes
- b. no
- c. I do not know

5. Public Health is for:

- a. Low income families
- b. All people
- c. People who work for the state
- d. None of the above

6. Do you think Public Health is important to your community?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I do not know

7. Have you ever thought of a career in public health?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I do not know

Internet Sites

<http://www.redcross.org/>

<http://www.apha.org/>

<http://phs.os.dhhs.gov/ophs/default.htm>

<http://www.4woman.gov/>

<http://www.omhrc.gov/>

<http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/>