New Members of the Office of Public Health Practice & Training

By Jennifer Le & Beth Resnick

The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health is committed to ensuring that graduates leave the School with the essential skills necessary to go into the professional work force through competency-based education and training. The School’s commitment to practice-based training is reflected not only through curricula, faculty, and events but also through the establishment of the Office of Public Health Practice and Training (Practice Office) in 2009. This commitment has been enhanced recently with faculty and staff additions to the Practice Office: Assistant Professors Lainie Rutkow and Daniel Barnett, on a part-time basis, to bolster Practice Office initiatives and Jennifer Le as the practicum navigator.

“These Practice Office additions enhance the School’s commitment and ability to promote public health by bridging the gap between research and application,” notes Associate Dean Tom Burke, “allowing us to not only enrich our academic training but also strengthen our research, advance the practice of public health, and ultimately improve the health of our communities.” As Practice Office faculty, Dr. Rutkow and Dr. Barnett support and encourage practice-based courses, applied research, and experiential learning opportunities through teaching, mentoring, and technical assistance.

Dr. Rutkow is an assistant professor with appointments in the departments of Health Policy & Management and Health, Behavior & Society. Her leadership roles include assistant director for the Johns Hopkins Center for Law and the Public’s Health, and a professor of public health policy at the School of Public Health at the University of California, Berkeley.

Lipitz Public Health Policy Fund Awards

The Office of Public Health Practice and the Department of Health Policy and Management were delighted to initiate the Lipitz Public Health Policy Fund Awards in 2012. Four JHSPH students were awarded funds to support their student-led projects to advance public health policy through research and practice, as described below.

For more information about the Lipitz Public Health Policy Fund Award, please visit the Practice Office website at www.jhsph.edu/practice.
Dr. Edyth Schoenrich’s passion for spreading knowledge to students is undeniable, and she truly is an inspiration to all who cross her path. She currently serves as the director of Part-time Professional Programs and associate chair of the MPH Program at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Dr. Schoenrich is revered not only for her professional accomplishments as a physician, researcher and public health practitioner but also for the incredible energy she exudes each and every day. I had the wonderful opportunity to speak with Dr. Schoenrich to hear her personal stories of struggle and triumph and her wise advice for those embarking on a career in public health.

**SE:** Everyone is amazed by your positive spirit and dedication to JHSPH. How do you always have so much energy?

**ES:** One of the major factors influencing a person’s life is feedback from other people. Part of what gives me energy is the energy I feel from students. They are the ones who are going to change the world and correct the mistakes that my generation and previous generations have made. One of my greatest joys is working with our students.

**SE:** Who has been an influence in shaping your career?

**ES:** My maternal Grandfather Kelly had a strong sense of the Life Force. He expressed this through gardening. As a little girl I helped him garden and marveled at how living plants disappeared in the winter, yet sprang out of the ground again in the spring.

The next major person was my 6th grade Natural Science teacher. She was an example of how a superb teacher can impact a young mind. Her classroom demonstrations conveyed respect for the mysterious Life Force. I yearned to understand this. I assumed studying medicine would give me the answers I sought, but of course, it only raised further questions.

**SE:** What are a few of the most gratifying moments of your career?

**ES:** The most overwhelming personal experience occurred when I was a medical student. For the first time, I assisted in the delivery of a new baby. Here was a new person with all the possibilities that life can provide ahead of him.

Both as a clinician and as a faculty member, I feel enormous satisfaction in assisting a person to grow and to fulfill his or her full potential. As a clinician, it is gratifying to know that I have helped another person by sharing my knowledge and decisions that I have made in providing care. As a faculty member, it is marvelous to work with individuals to help them clarify their own value systems and to find the paths they want to follow to expand their perspectives and commit themselves to shared goals.

Another gratifying experience is related to my growing understanding of how not just to survive, but to be effective in large bureaucratic organizations. For example, on the second day of my employment at the Maryland State Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, I asked the chief administrator to provide me with a bookcase for my office. He replied, “You don’t need a bookcase, I do the thinking around here.” At this point I went down the elevator, walked several blocks to a second hand store, bought a bookcase, dragged it back to my office and installed it. It was a turning point in my effectiveness in the Department. From then on, I had the chief administrator’s respect. I caution you to choose carefully the right moment for this kind of action.

**SE:** Can you name the most challenging adversities you have overcome to get to where you are now?

**ES:** There were two major social movements...
Faculty Q&A

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that affected me in my early career.

The first challenge was the fact that I studied medicine when there were very few women in the profession. I was only one of three women in my medical school class at the University of Chicago. When I came to Johns Hopkins, there were also very few women on the house staff.

Another challenge was related to the fact that at that time, the Johns Hopkins Hospital was segregated. My early years in clinical medicine occurred in the midst of the civil rights movement. I remember after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., looking out the window of my office watching Baltimore burn.

I have many stories I could tell about entering my profession before the women’s movement became strong and about the social transitions that occurred during the civil rights movement.

SE: I know that you were fortunate to know Anna Baetjer when she was working here at JHSPH. What characteristics made her a model public health practitioner?

ES: Anna Baetjer was a well-rounded academician, research scientist, and woman. She was active in the discovery of new scientific facts, particularly in relation to environmental hazards in the workplace. She had a gift for integrating new facts into knowledge and understanding what this means for society. She was an incredible teacher and communicator who lectured in well-organized paragraphs without notes and in sharply prescribed time limits. What was equally important was her conviction that knowledge should be used. She took students to industrial settings to show what it really means to work on an assembly line and what kinds of real hazards exist. She was committed to bringing about positive constructive change. Although she was caught up in the women’s movement, she was able to function within the culture of that time. She loved life and people. She had incredible energy. She loved the wonders of the outdoors, where she spent her holidays hiking among the snowcapped mountains of the West.

SE: What advice do you have for students entering the field of public health practice?

ES: Be sure your internal compass doesn’t wander. Keep in mind what you really want to accomplish. Establish specific goals within your broad value system. However, don’t be so rigid that you become ineffective. Choose the problems you work on so you can look back and say “That was worth doing.” Learn to delay your sense of achievement and satisfaction. A professional in public health has to learn that small increments of change can be real triumphs. Work in prevention with distant outcomes does not provide the same adrenaline charge as acute short-term situations. Be mature enough as a person and professional to delay your need for feedback and satisfaction.

New Members

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governing board member of SOURCE (Student Outreach Resource Center), and faculty adviser for the Anna Baetjer Society for Public Health Practice. She is also a member of the Eastern Region of the Network for Public Health Law. Dr. Rutkow’s research focuses on using law (legislation, regulation, and litigation) as a tool to promote and protect the public’s health. Dr. Rutkow teaches a practice-focused course 306.662.01: Public Health Agencies: Law, Policy, and Practice (4th term).

Dr. Barnett is an assistant professor with appointments in the departments of Environmental Health Sciences and Health Policy & Management. His public health practice experience includes working for the Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response at the Baltimore City Health Department. He is also project lead in the CDC-funded Johns Hopkins Preparedness and Emergency Response Research Center (P01) and a lead trainer in the Johns Hopkins Preparedness and Emergency Response Learning Center. Dr. Barnett’s research focuses on best practice models to enhance all-hazards public health emergency preparedness and response. Dr. Barnett teaches two practice-related courses: 305.607.01: Public Health Practice (2nd term, co-teaching with Beth Resnick, director of the Practice Office) and 180.670.01: Introduction to Public Health Emergency Preparedness (4th term).

Jennifer Le joined the Practice Office team in July 2012 to bolster the School’s student practicum support. Her responsibilities include identifying practice opportunities in Baltimore and the greater Maryland area, helping students find opportunities that best meet their career objectives and interests, and facilitating the relationships involved in the practicum experience (preceptor/partners-faculty advisers-students-administrative offices, etc.).

Le, a 2012 Johns Hopkins MPH graduate, has a passion for working directly with the community. During her MPH year, she engaged in multiple practice-based activities that allowed her to work directly with Baltimore community-based organizations. Additionally, Le was the program assistant for SOURCE. She served on the SOURCE student governing board and supported many practice-based programs including the Baltimore Community Practicum course and the Connection Community Consultants, a short-term opportunity for graduate students to serve as consultants for local Baltimore City community-based organizations.

We welcome these new Practice Office team members! For more information on their efforts, or to learn more about the Office of Public Health Practice and Training, please visit the website at www.jhsph.edu/practice.
Lipitz Awards

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2012 Lipitz Public Health Policy Fund Award Recipients:

Adele Houghton, part-time MPH Candidate
Prevalence of Green Building Strategies Reducing Localized Climate Change Vulnerabilities

Adele Houghton studied the link between the effects of climate change and the number of green building projects in Austin, Texas, and Chicago. Her study used spatial multiple logistic regression to analyze the strength of association at the neighborhood level between the prevalence of green building design strategies promoting climate change resilience and vulnerability to flooding and/or extreme heat events. The resulting Health Impact Assessment outlined recommendations for prioritizing green building strategies with the highest probability of enhancing neighborhood resilience to extreme heat and/or flooding events.

Through this project, Adele discovered how complicated a simple research question can become when you start delving into the details. She is very grateful for the Lipitz scholarship, as it supported the application of her study findings in a real-life policy context. The findings will be presented at the American Public Health Association annual meeting as a model for integrating climate change considerations into the green building process.

Ligia Paina, PhD Candidate, Department of International Health
Dual Practice in Uganda: A Mixed Methods Study on Policy and Management

Ligia Paina examined dual practice policy and management in Kampala, Uganda. Ligia began with a description of dual practice policy and management followed by an analysis of public sector health provider preferences. The work contributes evidence to the dialogue on health workforce issues in Uganda and may offer a model for other settings as well. She interviewed health providers and facility leadership at five public sector facilities in Kampala, as well as stakeholders from professional associations, the private not-for-profit sector, the private for-profit sector, and policymakers in Kampala. These interview findings provided the basis for the discrete choice experiment questionnaire, which is a method for eliciting stated preferences from respondents. The purpose of the questionnaire is to obtain provider preferences for various policy options which could be implemented to manage dual practice.

This project has taught her the importance of history and politics to Uganda’s contemporary issues in health workforce management, as well as the need for collaboration with local researchers. Ligia is very grateful for the Lipitz funding, as well as the support of mentors and co-workers in Uganda. The findings from this work will be presented at the Health Systems Research Symposium in Beijing.

Linnea Laestadius, PhD Candidate, Department of Health Policy and Management
Livestock Production, Meat and Dairy Consumption, and Climate Change: A Grounded Theory of NGO Responses

Linnea Laestadius seeks to understand what shapes nongovernmental organization (NGO) responses to the evidence that meat consumption contributes to climate change. In addition to developing a theory explaining these responses, she is working on recommendations for researchers and advocates who seek more political action and public education on the issue. More specifically, she is exploring how NGOs in the United States, Canada, and Sweden have engaged with meat consumption and climate change, and is also working to understand the barriers that have prevented groups from addressing this topic further.

Additionally, she is examining the motivations underlying specific messaging choices on the matter. The findings from this work will be relevant to other emerging questions that would benefit from NGO engagement.

This project has taught her that addressing behavior change is often seen to be challenging and not always a priority for many environmental NGOs, a realization that raises questions about the best approach to changing norms for diets, transportation, and water use in light of environmental concerns. Linnea’s research was recently presented at the JHU Homewood campus.

Susan Lynch, DrPH Candidate, Department of Health Policy and Management
Studying Evidence-Based Guidelines for Early Detection of Alzheimer’s Disease and Developing an Education Campaign for the Medical and Public Health Communities and the Public at Large Regarding the Benefits of Early Detection

Susan Lynch reviewed evidence-based interventions and best practices for early detection and diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease and made recommendations for potential public health education campaigns (in collaboration with the Public Policy Office of the Alzheimer’s Association in Washington, D.C.). The final product will include a work plan to educate the general public, as well as the public health and medical communities, on the benefits of early detection of Alzheimer’s disease.

Through this project, Susan learned the importance of defining the scope of a policy project upfront, as well as defining key terms and reference points for a policy project. For example, “early” detection of disease can mean different things to different people. When completed, the Work Plan Final Report will be presented at two conference meetings of the Alzheimer’s Association in New York and Washington, D.C.
EVENTS SPOTLIGHT

Inaugural Public Health Practice Week

The inaugural Public Health Practice Week was launched at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (JHSPH) in March 2012. Students in the Anna Baetjer Society for Public Health Practice (ABS) initiated the idea and organized the week with co-sponsorship from the Office of Public Health Practice and Training. It was an informative and fun-filled week of activities, including a conversation introducing students to public health practice careers and a fundraiser for Commodore John Rodgers Elementary/Middle School.

A Practice Conversation

A panel of JHSPH practice-based faculty, including Tom Burke (associate dean for practice), Stefan Baral (EPI), Lainie Rutkow (HPM), Jacqueline Agnew (EHS), and Edyth Schoenrich (MPH office), shared their perspectives on the future of public health practice at JHSPH and in the field, as well as experiential guidance for students interested in professional public health practice careers. Faraz Siddiqui, MPH ‘12, appreciated the discussion because “the panel [discussion] showed how various academics have used theory and academic skills in fields as diverse as human rights, occupational health, health policy, and environmental health advocacy.” In addition, a brief tribute was held for the life and accomplishments of Anna Baetjer, a pioneer in the field of occupational health. Drs. Edyth Schoenrich and Jacqueline Agnew shared inspirational anecdotes from their personal relationships with the late Dr. Baetjer. Dr. Schoenrich commented: “One of Dr. Baetjer’s academic core values was that the understanding of public health issues at a conceptual level should always be integrated with exposing students to the realities of workplace settings. After visits to work settings, she always followed up with classroom discussions about the students’ reactions to these realities and their level of understanding of what they had experienced.”

Commodore John Rodgers Elementary/Middle School Fundraiser

The fundraiser, coordinated by students affiliated with ABS, for the Commodore John Rodgers Elementary/Middle School (CJR School) in East Baltimore, was held at Shuckers in Fells Point. More than 50 people attended, including JHSPH faculty and staff, JHSPH students and their families and friends, and teachers and school administrators from the CJR School. A few years ago, the CJR School was well below the state accepted academic standards levels; only 9 percent of eighth-graders were proficient in English and math. Since then, with the help of Living Classrooms Foundation (a JHU SOURCE partner), the CJR School has made measurable progress, improving reading and math scores, school enrollment, school environment, and teaching quality. This event was a celebration to showcase the success of the CJR School and to raise money to continue the ongoing efforts. For more information about CJR School: www.baltimorecityschools.org/domain/536. For more information about Living Classrooms Foundation: www.livingclassrooms.org.

MD Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Field Trip

The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) hosted a second annual field trip to DHMH for Johns Hopkins students in Spring 2012. A panel of DHMH program heads spoke about their roles and responsibilities, as well as the application of skills and knowledge to everyday public health practice. Students gained knowledge about DHMH, as well as public health practice career advice. “The visit offers DHMH professionals the opportunity to directly engage with students starting careers in public health. It is part of the overall aim of the Department to strengthen the training pipeline and plan for the next generation of public health leaders,” notes Ginny Seyler, DHMH Core Funding Program coordinator and local health liaison. Sarah Evans, MPH ’12, commented that “the field trip provided a valuable opportunity for us to connect with public health leaders in Maryland and gain insight on career paths at a state health department.” The Practice Office plans to sponsor a third trip to DHMH in 2013.

For upcoming events, including Public Health Practice Week 2013, check out the Practice Office website (www.jhsph.edu/practice).
Dr. David L. Rogers: A Career Devoted to Public Health Practice

By Nino Paichadze

Dr. David L. Rogers has had an exciting public health practice career, serving for 39 years as the health officer of the Calvert County Health Department before retiring in July 2012, making him one of the longest serving health officers in the United States.

Dr. Rogers entered the workforce as a primary care physician, gaining experience in public health while serving as a CDC Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) officer working in the area of communicable diseases for the United States Public Health Service. After his EIS experience, Dr. Rogers completed a one-year public health residency in the Anne Arundel County Health Department and then a master of public health (MPH) degree at the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health (today the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health). Dr. Rogers stressed that doing the residency in Anne Arundel County before the MPH is the “smart way” to do it, as this broad practice experience in public health enabled him to make the most of his academic coursework.

Dr. Rogers became health officer of the Calvert County Health Department in 1973 and recalls feeling confident when he first took the job. However, he discovered that neither his public health residency nor his MPH coursework alone prepared him to be successful. Many skills needed to be a good health officer, such as managing people effectively, he developed on the job. Dr. Rogers favors a participatory management style, encouraging employees to take part in organizational decision making and in turn become partial owners of the results. Additionally, he stresses the point that he respects people who make mistakes, as he believes that those who never make mistakes never really do work.

The Calvert County Health Department (CCHD) was established in the 1920s. In 1973, when Dr. Rogers joined, there was a staff of 12 people. Today, the department has a staff of over 160 and serves more than 100,000 people. Services offered include the areas of maternal and child health, family planning and reproductive health, environmental health, and communicable diseases.

Dr. Rogers’ advice to MPH students: “A good knowledge base and experience are needed, but most important is the learning on the job. You develop into a professional only by engaging in “real world” public health practice.”

Recent Grad’s Path to Employment: From Ghana to Howard County

Lena Bloom Hershkovitz, MPH ’09, has had a strong commitment to community engagement since the start of her career. She first worked for nonprofit advocacy groups and then spent two years with the Peace Corps in Ghana. Lena returned to the States knowing she wanted to work in public health. She enrolled in the Bloomberg School of Public Health, where community engagement activities complemented her academic work. As part of the PHASE Internship course, she conducted a qualitative analysis of HIV testing programs for the Baltimore City Health Department.

With MPH in hand, Lena joined Healthy Howard, a nonprofit organization in Howard County that is part of the Maryland Health Department. As director of Eligibility Services, she works to provide clients with health care. In response to the Affordable Health Care Act, Lena is building partnerships for Healthy Howard to transition to be the state health insurance exchange navigator for the entire western region of Maryland.

Lena emphasizes practical skills: “The more you learn how public health works practically, the more employable you will be,” she says. “Networking is crucial,” she adds, and a good starting point is through existing relationships, such as Peace Corps volunteers or JHSPH alumni.

Lena herself followed this advice, obtaining her Healthy Howard position through networking with Dr. Peter Beilenson, a speaker in an MPH course.

“Hopkins is truly a bastion of opportunity,” she says. “Definitely take advantage of it!”
Students Value “Doing” Public Health Practice at JHSPH

By Lainie Rutkow

Each year, a new group of enthusiastic public health students joins the Johns Hopkins community, and many of them go on to have public health practice careers. Yet, upon arrival at JHSPH, these students often have a wide range of perceptions and confusions about public health practice. Reflecting on the beginning of her time at Hopkins, Madeleine Schlefer, MPH ’12, recalls, “I hadn’t thought much about the concept of public health practice. I had never heard that term before.” Similarly, Karen Wiswall, MPH ’12, remembers that, during the summer before. They had never heard that term before.

For others, as they move on to public health practice experiences, this grounding in practice provides a foundation for their work. Nirosha Mahendraratnam, MSPH ’12, is a healthcare consultant at Avalere Health, where she employs the skills gained through her experiences at Johns Hopkins to assess the impacts of legislation on the US healthcare system.

Student organizations—such as the Anna Baetjer Society for Public Health Practice, the J.B. Grant Global Health Society, and the Student Assembly Community Affairs Committee—provide additional opportunities for students to engage in public health practice activities. For example, each year the MPH students who are on the board of the Anna Baetjer Society coordinate multiple practice-based activities, ranging from field trips to the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to panel discussions about the application of emerging health technologies in the field. Kacey Wulff, MPH ’12, served as the president of the Society for the 2011–12 academic year. Looking back on her year with the Society, she says, “I loved directly participating in practice-based activities and being in the middle of the action.” Jenny McManus, MPH ’12, served as one of the Society’s student seminar coordinators. For this seminar series, current MPH students are recruited to give lunchtime talks about public health practice experiences they had prior to matriculating at JHSPH.

“I bounce dissertation ideas off of practitioners as much as I do with my academic advisers and mentors.”

—Nicole Errett

Regardless of which public health sector students enter, they become valued members of the Johns Hopkins alumni network, who can introduce the next cohort of students to public health practice. These alumni are essential to imparting the importance of “doing” practice—and not simply learning about it—to future generations of public health practice leaders who will attend JHSPH.
You’ve heard it a million times—“practice makes perfect.” Although more commonly used in reference to mastering a sports activity or cooking the perfect meal, it is certainly apropos to public health practice!

There are a variety of courses and placement opportunities available to Johns Hopkins students to “practice” public health through hands-on experience. Two of these opportunities are the Public Health Application for Student Experience (PHASE) and the Baltimore Community Practicum (BCP) courses.

PHASE and BCP are for-credit courses that place students in government agencies (PHASE) or Baltimore community-based organizations (BCP). The placements for these courses are “pre-packaged” in that the projects address a need identified by the partnering organization and are formulated into a “ready to go” student project. Students work on site gaining exposure to the operations of the organization itself, as well as one-on-one mentoring by a public health professional preceptor. The course faculty provide additional support and technical assistance as warranted. Students in both courses complete a final paper and presentation.

PHASE was initiated in 2003 by Dr. Michel Ibrahim, professor of Epidemiology, and Dipti Shah (MPH ’99), chief of the Office of Immigrant Health at the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH). PHASE students have worked on a wide range of projects including outbreak investigations, HIV/AIDS, obesity prevention, medical waste disposal, and hepatitis C screenings. Dr. Ibrahim believes strongly in enriching students’ educational experiences with real-world practice. “PHASE gives students an opportunity to make a real impact in the community by participating in projects that have significant public health outcomes such as making new policies or reordering funding priorities,” he says. Dipti Shah reflects on her days as an MPH student, “I was eager for the real-life learning applications that PHASE offers. In my current role at DHMH, it has been wonderful collaborating with students on projects that have immediate impact in community.”

The placements for these courses are “pre-packaged” in that the projects address a need identified by the partnering organization and are formulated into a “ready to go” student project.

The Baltimore Community Practicum course was established in 2006 by Mindi Levin, director of SOURCE, in collaboration with HPM faculty. Levin notes that “the Baltimore Community Practicum course has been a rewarding partnership, providing students with the opportunity to apply theory to practice, while simultaneously supporting community-based organizations in the completion of high-priority initiatives. There have been extraordinary benefits to both our students and the community.”

Students often use their projects in these courses as a springboard for their capstone or thesis projects, as well as their public health careers. For example, CP Hsia (MPH ’11) completed a PHASE project with the Baltimore City Mayor’s Office of Emergency Management (MOEM) and now works at MOEM as a preparedness program manager. CP reflects on PHASE as “an invaluable experience that allowed me the opportunity to meet other stakeholders and gain a familiarity with and understanding of Baltimore’s emergency preparedness system that prepared me for my current position.” Sally Hess (MPH ’09) notes that she participated in the BCP course “to add hands-on experiences to apply the theory I was learning in the classroom. I never imagined the experiences I gained in BCP would lead to employment, but then the House of Ruth had a position open in the same department where I had my BCP internship. My prior experience working with them enhanced my selection for the position and allowed for a smooth transition from student to employee.”

PHASE and BCP offer a foundation for the School’s current efforts to expand student practicum opportunities.
