In this Spring issue of Public Health In Practice, we are delighted to report on the many ongoing practice activities at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health! In this issue we highlight a number of collaborations with entities both outside and within the School. The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH)’s Public Health Laboratory Central Lab is moving to East Baltimore, bringing in new opportunities and strengthening our existing relationships with DHMH (page 8). Additionally, we are pleased to highlight the work of two alumni engaged in public health practice collaborations with the School: Dr. Barbara Brookmyer, the Health Officer of Frederick County, Maryland, and Kacey Wulff, a Special Assistant at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (page 4). We also feature a Faculty Q&A section with Dr. Aruna Chandran, an Associate Scientist and pediatric physician at Johns Hopkins, who concurrently serves as the Chief of Epidemiologic Services at the Baltimore City Health Department (page 2).

While I am excited to report my nomination by President Barak Obama for the position of Assistant Administrator at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), I am saddened at the prospect of losing my day-to-day interactions with the Hopkins community. As this newsletter goes to press, I am awaiting confirmation by the United States Senate. During this period of waiting, I feel quite lucky to be here in such a vibrant, stimulating and engaged community (page 7).

We hope that you enjoy this issue of Public Health in Practice.

Yvonne Kingon’s practicum took her on location at Baltimore’s Chase-Brexton Clinic to participate in a video production for the Baltimore City Health Department multi-media education program on HIV/AIDS.

JHSPH Student Practicum: Connecting the Classroom to the Real World

In the 2013-2014 academic year, the School initiated a practicum requirement for all professional degree graduate students (MPH, MSPH, DrPH). The practicum enriches the learning experience by enabling students to apply skills learned in the classroom to real-world public health issues. It also engages faculty and partner organizations directly with students. The practicum is structured for students to gain practical experience and build their public health skill sets. Students work under the supervision of a preceptor on a population-focused public health project for at least 100 hours. Given the large number of students and wide range of backgrounds and interests, a flexible approach was developed to meet student needs and schedules. Options for practica range from courses with built-in practice components to working with faculty to projects with partner organizations in Baltimore and around the world. Tahir Mahmood, MPH ’14, found that his practicum at the Cancer Registry at Sinai Hospital in Baltimore, MD was an excellent experience to broaden his exposure to public health practice. “I was new to the practice environment, but I was encouraged by the commendable support and guidance from my preceptor. Through analyzing cancer registry data and its uses to address cancer, this opportunity was not only beneficial from an academic point of view, but it also broadened my professional vision and approaches from the public health perspective.”

Courses with a practicum component

Courses with a practicum component allow students to directly integrate skills taught in the classroom into the community.
Aruna Chandran, MD, MPH, FAAP
Associate Scientist, Department of Epidemiology; Pediatric Physician at Johns Hopkins; Chief of Epidemiologic Services, Baltimore City Health Department

Dr. Chandran is an associate scientist in the Department of Epidemiology and a pediatric physician at Johns Hopkins, concurrently serving as the Chief of Epidemiologic Services at the Baltimore City Health Department. Prior to this appointment, she served on the faculty in the Department of International Health and as the associate director for surveillance and monitoring with the Johns Hopkins International Injury Research Unit. Dr. Chandran completed her undergraduate degree in Sociology at Wesleyan University, and her medical degree at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in 2000. She completed her residency training in Pediatrics at Northwestern's Children's Memorial Hospital and a fellowship in Preventive Medicine at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Q: What attracted you to public health?
A: I was actually drawn to community/population health long before I decided to go into medicine. As I looked into various community-based health programs, I found that many of them were run by physicians who also had public health knowledge, training and experience. Therefore, I decided to go to medical school with an interest in developing skills in community and population health.

Q: Do you still engage in clinical practice?
A: Until this year, when I became pregnant, I continued to practice at the Bayview campus. Public health tends to be a prolonged process. Accumulating data from studies takes a while and the delayed gratification occurs in the form of publications and other forms of data-sharing. Clinical practice gives me a sense of instant gratification. You see a patient and immediately can see the impact of your efforts. Engaging in both public health and clinical work allows me to work both at the patient and population levels. This duality gives me perspective and insight on both levels.

Q: How do you balance your work at Hopkins and the Baltimore City Health Department?
A: The thing about Hopkins is that most people stay extremely busy and it is just a matter of what proportion of their time they give to a specific activity. Along with my role of teaching and advising here at Hopkins, I am the Chief Epidemiologist at the Baltimore City Health Department. If I wasn’t doing the work at the Health Department, more of my time would probably go towards writing manuscripts, serving on committees, or other activities that are equally as important.

Q: Advice for current students?
A: MD/MPH students: Find the intersection of your public health interests and clinical interests. The great thing about the dual background is that you will be able to make decisions and evaluate problems from unique perspectives. On one hand, you can analyze data from important studies related to your patients; on the other hand, you can interpret research studies to offer the best individual-level clinical advice possible.

Public health graduate students: There tend to be two types of public health graduate students: those launching their career upon graduation and those aiming to gain a bit of real-world experience before returning to School for a PhD or DrPH.

For those launching a career post-graduation: It is important to gain experience in your... continued on page 6
Practicum

School currently offers 19 courses with a practicum component and anticipates expanding practicum course offerings next year. The courses can either completely or partially meet the practicum requirement, depending on the practicum component scope and time. The courses cover a wide range of public health skills and interest areas, including program evaluation, survey design, and data analysis. Carey Borkoski, Ph.D., Director of the School’s Masters in Public Policy Program, teaches the Data Analysis Workshop in Public Health Policy Practicum course. “Implementing a practicum component in my data analysis course has been a fantastic experience. Student reaction and feedback to the client-based project has been very positive. Students enjoy working directly with local Baltimore organizations and gaining the opportunity to apply the skills and knowledge they are learning,” she says.


JHSPH faculty-sponsored practicum projects

Students can also choose to complete their practicum with a Hopkins faculty member collaborating with an outside organization. This benefits all involved. Students gain real-world experience, faculty members gain additional support for their projects, and organizations gain an academic perspective on their work. Students this year completed practica with a wide range of faculty, as well as Centers and Institutes at JHSPH. For example, through the Johns Hopkins Center for Public Health and Human Rights, a student worked in partnership with The Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR) to collect and analyze data on the HIV/AIDS epidemic for key populations in Africa. The aim was to develop a Global Fund Toolkit to identify gaps in data and, in turn, better serve the target populations. Jack McAllister, from amfAR’s Public Policy Office, notes that “the student’s practicum work at the Hopkins Center was key in being able to synthesize public health data to support evidence-based funding allocation decisions by bilateral and multilateral donors focused on HIV. These inputs will feed directly into decisions affecting the expenditure of significant investments supporting maximal efficiency and impact of these funds.” Other Centers and Institutes that have hosted practicum students include the International Vaccine Access Center, the Lighthouse, and the Institute for Quality and Patient Safety.

Customized practicum projects

Students can also develop their own customized practicum with a partner organization to develop skills and/or focus on a particular area of interest. These customized projects offer opportunities for the School to build and strengthen relationships with partner organizations. Partnering organizations include non-profits, for-profits, community-based organizations, and health departments in Baltimore, throughout the United States, and abroad. With Washington, DC just a short train ride away, many students have taken the opportunity to complete projects there, including through SRA International, Inc., Jhpiego, and the Ministry of Health Labour and Welfare. Students have contributed to international governmental public health initiatives. For example, Hiroto Araki, Chief Coordinator of Science and Technology, is very appreciative of the expertise and research skills Bloomberg students have brought to the Japanese Ministry of Health Labour and Welfare.

The practicum is a great opportunity to expand the School’s public health practice portfolio, while simultaneously preparing students for future public health careers. Marie Diener-West, Chair of the Master of Public Health Program, reflects that “at first, a requirement for more than 200 MPH students over an 11-month period seemed overwhelming, but the success of this requirement has been phenomenal. The collective efforts of the MPH Practicum Working Group and the participation of many dedicated preceptors and faculty and of course the strength and talent of our students have created many meaningful practical and translational opportunities. We are delighted with the outcomes this year and look forward to further growth and development of the practicum program.”

For more detailed information on the JHSPH MPH practicum, please visit http://www.jhsph.edu/offices-and-services/practice-and-training/practicum/
Interview with Dr. Barbara Brookmyer

By Natalie Draisin

From the Classroom to the Front Lines of Public Health

Reflecting on her MPH studies at Johns Hopkins, Dr. Barbara Brookmyer, MD, MPH ’94 recalls sitting in Dr. Tom Burke’s Public Health Practice course. “I can still remember listening at the edge of my seat to Tommy Thomas, the local health officer from Harford County, Maryland describing the day in and day out of his job. The breadth and depth of it all was inspiring.” What was particularly intriguing was the mix of policy, strategy, and the ability to “be right there with the intended beneficiaries, on the front lines.”

And join the front lines is exactly what Dr. Brookmyer did. As the Frederick County, Maryland Health Officer since 2003, she serves as the County’s lead public health official. She directs the Health Department’s nine divisions and their respective programs, including immunizations, WIC, cancer prevention, emergency preparedness, food inspections, mental health counseling, school health services, and programs for developmentally disabled children and adults. Her responsibilities today reflect the same breadth and depth that inspired her in 1994.

Dr. Brookmyer considers the most challenging, but also most educational, part of her career a suspected cancer cluster that she has been involved with since 2010. Residents concerned about high rates of cancer in the county strongly suspected a relationship between cancer rates and proximity to nearby Fort Detrick, part of which is classified by the federal government as a Superfund waste site. Much like a scene out of the movie Erin Brockovich, Dr. Brookmyer held a public meeting in 2010. Over 200 residents showed up to air their grievances. For over 2 hours, one by one they each expressed their concerns and asked questions. Dr. Brookmyer and her staff listened and wrote down every question on an easel pad for all to read, allowing residents to confirm that their questions were recorded correctly. Answers to each question were then posted on the health department’s website.

Dr. Brookmyer’s biggest take-away from this experience? Create public accountability. She made sure that each and every one of the county’s residents felt they were being listened to and that their concerns were of the utmost importance. When she couldn’t answer a question herself, she referred the resident to an expert who could provide more information. Community involvement is imperative. She strove to engage community members with a variety of backgrounds and skillsets to help with the suspected cancer cluster investigation. By facilitating the process of bringing the community together and helping people apply their diverse skills, such as communications and institutional knowledge of the community, Dr. Brookmyer channeled residents’ frustration into productivity and community building.

Dr. Brookmyer enjoys giving back to the School and providing inspiration to current public health students, just as she received back in 1994. She offers the following advice: “Build skills that will help you take an evidence-based approach to your work, and ensure that the information you produce is valid. These skills, such as data analysis, are harder to acquire once you’re out of the academic setting – biostatistics is key.”

“No matter where you are in your professional development, it is important to focus on gaining skills to further protect the public’s health. I am so grateful for the opportunities and experiences I gained while at Hopkins and continue to build on as I work to protect the health of the residents of Frederick County.”

What Health Disparities & Hurricanes Have in Common: Alumna Kacey Wulff, MPH

By Saviour Achilike

Since graduating in 2012, Kacey Wulff, MPH, has wasted little time applying her transformative Hopkins experience to literally “saving lives, millions at a time.” Her experiences at JHSPH as the Anna Baetjer Society (ABS) president and a Sommer Scholar coupled with her current disaster preparedness position at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) give her valuable insight and perspective on the practice of public health.

At JHSPH, Kacey studied health policy and health reform, but credits her public health practice efforts with the Anna Baetjer Society as the highlight of her JHSPH experience. “The ultimate measure of our work is the impact on the communities we serve, and my practice experiences embedded this perspective into my MPH year through opportunities to bond with the Baltimore community and my classmates. It was always a good weekend when it started off with a group of us spending the morning volunteering together, or planning for the next community fundraiser.”

Currently, Kacey works in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Preparedness and... continued on page 6
Anna Baetjer and J.B. Grant Societies Career Trip to DC

The Anna Baetjer Society for Public Health Practice (ABS) and the J.B. Grant Global Health Society (JBG) hosted a career development day trip to Washington, DC in December 2013.

Students heard from staff at a number of organizations, including Population Services International (PSI), the World Bank, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The trip highlighted skills, backgrounds, and experiences employers are looking for in potential employees. The speakers provided job-seeking tips (e.g., it is often better to research projects and programs of interest and then contact specific individuals involved in those initiatives rather than applying through online job portals). Internships and fellowships were recommended as a great way to “get your foot in the door,” particularly at highly competitive organizations.

The trip was a great career development opportunity and strengthened the School’s relationships with these organizations for future collaborations and events!

Third Annual Public Health Practice Week

ABS and the Office of Public Health Practice and Training co-sponsored the third annual Public Health Practice Week in April 2014 providing students, faculty, and alumni opportunities to learn and share their practice expertise and apply their academic learning to real world problems. Event highlights included:

**The Distracted Driving Case Competition**

Students brainstormed solutions to prevent youth from using mobile devices while driving. The case competition was arranged in collaboration with Consumers Union, the policy and action arm of Consumer Reports. Distracted driving is a major public health concern. In 2012, approximately 421,000 people were injured in motor vehicle crashes involving a distracted driver.

Students developed recommendations to address this problem and presented them to judges Bill Ward (Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health) and Ami Gadhia (Consumers Union). Judges provided feedback to participants and selected the winning team: Natalie Draisin and Saviour Achilike. The team proposed to raise awareness and promote behavior change through an app called T&D (Texting and Driving) that uses games to incentivize behavior change. ABS recognized that students are eager to work in teams and prepare for case-based interviews. This competition enabled students to practice a real case propelling them from the classroom to the professional world.

Ms. Gadhia reflected on the event, “Engaging public health students on this issue helps us [Consumers Union] determine how best to disseminate messages to youth and how we might change driver behavior. The most exciting aspect of this is that the student generated ideas will now be used to inform Consumers Union’s current efforts and initiatives.”

**Photo Novella Contest**

A Photo Novella Contest involved a group of students in Professor Debra Roter’s Health Literacy course who worked with community-based organizations through SOURCE (Student Outreach Resource Center) to develop educational photo novellas. The photo novellas present public health information in a practical and impactful manner at a literacy level appropriate for the targeted communities on issues such as bullying, healthy eating, and health insurance access. The winning photo novella was “Believe in Bonding,” created in partnership with the Baltimore Department of Social Services. Students Mary Houghton, Dania Rodriguez, Silvia Fang, Dennis Chia, Mae Al Dossari, and Jenna Schiffelbein worked with teen moms to develop the photo novella that illustrated strategies to improve bonding with their children.

**Other Public Health Practice Week Events**

Other events included panel discussions with MPH alumni, an April Fool’s Day Game: “Public Health Myths vs. Facts,” a screening of a documentary on the history of the School with a discussion with School historian Karen Thomas, and a community service event with the Commodore John Rodgers School. Dr. Lainie Rutkow, ABS faculty advisor, explains, “This week embodied public health practice by engaging current students, alumni, faculty,
Response, helping communities prepare for, respond to, and recover from the public health and medical implications of crises ranging from natural disasters to attacks to new infectious diseases. “Sometimes, it’s supporting an active event with first responders and federal assets. Other times, it’s policy development to promote resilience. One part of our office works on developing medical countermeasures—products like anthrax therapeutics or other things in an emergency we might really need, but that if not for government investment, might not get developed.”

She emphasizes that “preparedness work is intrinsically intertwined with work to reduce health disparities. As my boss, Dr. Lurie, says, ‘If you can’t do it every day, you can’t do it game day.’ If our system can’t meet the community’s needs every day, then in a crisis, when underlying disparities are exacerbated, it will only get worse. Work that strengthens our system and reduces health inequities makes us more resilient in times of disaster, too.” Kacey’s focus, therefore, is on innovation for vulnerable populations, and the links between preparedness and policies such as the Affordable Care Act.

Her advice to current students preparing to enter the workforce is to be aware of “the public health implications of anything that touches people—even if it’s not a public health job in the traditional sense; think broadly about what people-focused jobs [you] want; be kind to yourself, because it is a very hard market; and be sure to reach out to alumni.”

**Faculty Q&A**

Q: As a supervisor of epidemiologic services at the Baltimore City Health Department, what are the types of students you take on for an internship?

A: We often work with students from schools throughout the area. I get many emails from students looking for internships; the more specific their inquiry the better. For example, ‘you are interested in obesity prevention and looking to work 8-10 hours a week and your availabilities are mostly on Fridays.’ This gives me a lot to work with. It is also important to let me know if you are looking for a volunteer or paid position. The process of getting funding and paying employees is not a simple one for governmental agencies, but can be done in some cases. Do your homework! I can tell who spent time learning about our agency and what we do when they identify how their interests coincide with our work and how they can contribute to specific programs in their emails.

Q: Any final words of advice?

A: No matter what path you take it is critical to focus on your passions and interests. Whether it be working in the community, providing clinical services, delving into research, or program evaluation, it is important to feel good about what you are doing while gaining skills and knowledge that can help advance your personal and professional development.
Honoring Dipti Shah for 10 years of Dedicated Service to the Public Health Applications for Student Experience (PHASE) Program

The Bloomberg School (JHSPH)’s Office of Public Health Practice and Training, in partnership with the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), was pleased to honor Dipti D. Shah for 10 years of dedicated leadership in the Public Health Applications for Student Experience (PHASE) Program.

Dipti D. Shah, Chief of the Office of Immigrant Health at DHMH, initiated PHASE as a joint Hopkins-DHMH endeavor after her graduation from the MPH program at JHSPH in 1999. PHASE was envisioned as a way to enrich the MPH experience with real-world practice experiences, while simultaneously providing DHMH with motivated students to engage in the work of the Department. With the support and assistance of Dr. Michel Ibrahim, professor of Epidemiology at JHSPH, PHASE was launched in 2003, providing internship opportunities for JHSPH students at DHMH and Maryland local health departments. More than 125 PHASE projects have been completed in a variety of areas, including policy analysis, program evaluation, disease prevention, and emergency preparedness. Building on their PHASE experiences, many students have gone on to public health practice careers.

Jesse Song (MSPH ’14), a PHASE Intern in 2013 and now a Health Policy Analyst in the DHMH Office of Compliance and Policy, reflects on his PHASE experience, “It was fantastic. PHASE exposed me to interview for the position. That was the beginning of a lengthy process of extensive interview, including policy analysis, research, and communicable and infectious disease control projects.


Bloomberg’s Associate Dean of Practice Nominated to Lead EPA’s Scientific Research Arm

By Vini Singh

Dr. Thomas Burke, Associate Dean of Public Health Practice and Training at the Bloomberg School (JHSPH), was nominated by President Barak Obama to serve as the Assistant Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). With prior positions as the Deputy Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Health, Chairman of the National Academy Panel for Improving Risk Analysis Approaches used by the U.S. EPA, and Professor at JHSPH, news of his nomination was certainly not surprising. Dr. Burke received a phone call in May 2013 from the White House informing him that he had been selected as one of the candidates to interview for the position. That was the beginning of a lengthy process of extensive interviews and vetting. In November, his nomination was officially announced. In December, Dr. Burke appeared before the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment & Public Works for a hearing. In January 2014 he was recommended by the Committee and is now awaiting confirmation from the full Senate. Dr. Burke says, “Waiting is definitely the most difficult part of this process.”

If confirmed by the full Senate, Dr. Burke will lead EPA’s scientific research arm. In preparing for this task, Dr. Burke looks to his past for inspiration: “Public health is personal to me. I am from New Jersey and I have led various environmental clean-up efforts and seen many family and friends succumb to cancer and other environmentally related ailments. I hope to make environmental risk assessment efforts more robust and implement a risk assessment agenda for the nation that we developed through the National Academy’s Science and Decisions Report.” He also hopes to broaden EPA’s efforts to reach out to the states and influence energy policy to improve the health of our nation’s environment.

Leading research at the US EPA is an amazing opportunity, but working at Hopkins is truly a dream job. So although excited about the prospect of being part of EPA leadership, Dr. Burke is equally excited about his return to Hopkins after his time at EPA. In his best terminator imitation, Dr. Burke quips, “I’ll be back!”
After more than 35 years at the Maryland State Complex near the Bolton Hill neighborhood, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's Maryland Public Health Laboratory Central Lab (Health Lab) is moving to East Baltimore to the Baltimore Science and Technology Park, just three blocks north of the School of Public Health. The Health Lab completes testing and laboratory analysis to protect and improve the public health of all Marylanders by tackling serious community threats such as emerging and reemerging infectious diseases, growing antimicrobial drug resistance, contaminated and overburdened water supplies, and foodborne pathogens associated with new and imported food products. Dr. Ana Rule, who teaches the practicum course Industrial Hygiene Laboratory and is a Research Associate in the Department of Environmental Health Sciences at the Bloomberg School, is “very excited about this great opportunity to build a stronger partnership between the Hopkins community and the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.”

Construction of the 6-level laboratory facility began in January 2012 and completion is anticipated in fall 2014. The building reflects over ten years of effort and planning to ensure that the Lab has state of the art technology and infrastructure in place to address modern day public health threats, including bioterrorism and emerging diseases.

The new facility for the Health Lab consists of five scientific divisions (Microbiology; Environmental Chemistry; Molecular Biology; Virology & Immunology; Newborn & Childhood Screening) and two Offices (Laboratory Emergency Preparedness & Response and Administrative and Support Programs). The Lab improves disease prevention and control by implementing new molecular and genetic technologies to identify and track infectious microorganisms responsible for disease outbreaks; detecting hazardous chemicals and their metabolites; monitoring gene mutations associated with identifiable and treatable genetic defects in newborn babies; and implementing new scientific instruments and procedures to help limit and control the effects of biological and chemical terrorism. The Bloomberg School recently partnered with the Division of Environmental Chemistry to analyze several hundred paired mother-child blood specimens to study placental transfer and concentrations of toxic metals in mothers, newborns, and young children from the Boston Birth Cohort (BBC), a population very similar to urban Baltimore City (Journal of Exposure Science and Environmental Epidemiology, in press). The Division of Virology & Immunology also partnered with the Bloomberg School by hosting an MPH intern who worked on identifying animal rabies virus variants in the State of Maryland. The student performed animal rabies virus antigen typing assays to distinguish the strains and then conducted data analysis and summation. These types of academic-practice partnerships strengthen both the research and practice of public health.

Jennifer Newman Barnhart, Health Lab Deputy Director of Administrative and Support Programs and a Bloomberg MPH alumna (MPH ’10), is eager to move into the new building. “We are excited to build a mutual partnership between the Maryland Public Health Laboratory and the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (JHSPH). We welcome the Hopkins community with activities such as lab tours, internships and shadowing opportunities. There is additional opportunity for practia beyond the lab, including legislative and policy development and prescription drug abuse interventions through the Division of Drug Control.” Furthermore, the proximity of the Health Lab to JHSPH provides a unique professional benefit for the Health Lab employees to access the School’s resources, augmenting public health training, recruitment, and retention. Health Lab leadership hopes that the move will enable the Health Lab and the School to work together to serve the growing public health needs of Maryland citizens. Being part of Forest City emerging biotech park and Baltimore City’s East Side community places the Health Lab in a great location for the future. Dr. Rule also looks forward to the move: “We look forward to closer proximity to the Health Lab and hope to foster stronger partnerships to support the work of the Health Lab while also providing academic and professional opportunities for Hopkins faculty, staff, and students.”

For more information about the Health Lab move, internship opportunities, and job opportunities, please visit http://dhmh.maryland.gov/laboratories/SitePages/Home.aspx or contact Rachel Michael (rachel.smichael@maryland.gov), the Health Lab Training Coordinator.