Where Can the Health Systems Program Take You?
Greetings! We appreciate your interest in the Health Systems Program of the Department of International Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. As one of the largest academic programs on Health Systems in the country, we pride ourselves on the quality of our faculty, staff and students.

Our work takes us to nearly 50 countries around the world. This incredible reach affords our students diverse opportunities for learning and training. The hallmarks of our academic program are a rigorous focus on scientific methods, a multidisciplinary faculty, and training through real-world examples. We cater to different experience levels and to those with diverse disciplinary backgrounds. Our students learn in a collaborative, high-tech, and friendly environment on campus, online and in the field.

We present here some of our successful alumni to highlight possible career paths available to you after graduation. Along with information about each degree program, you’ll find an overview of our faculty’s research pursuits. I welcome your interest and hope that we will soon get the chance to meet with you in person. We look forward to having you as one of our stellar alumni.

Adnan Hyder, MD, MPH, PhD
Program Director, Health Systems Program
Professor and Associate Chair, Department of International Health
The Health Systems Program

The Health Systems Program trains its graduates to design efficient systems and implement equitable and cost-effective strategies for delivering health care and public health interventions to disadvantaged and underserved communities in the U.S. and abroad.

The Health Systems Program is one of four academic programs in the Department of International Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Since 1961, the Department’s mission has been to protect the lives of underserved populations across the globe. We achieve this by understanding health problems and developing efficient, affordable means of preventing and treating disease. The Department conducts research, educates scientists and health professionals, guides health policy and public health practice, and builds institutional capacity that can result in sustained, improved health for all.

The Health Systems Program prepares graduates for leadership roles in

- health policy and planning
- health financing and management
- monitoring and evaluation
- public health teaching and training
- institution building
- community development
- research

Degrees offered

- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
- Doctor of Public Health (DrPH)
- Master of Science in Public Health (MSPH)
- Master of Health Science (MHS) in Health Economics

www.jhsph.edu/HealthSystems

Research focus

- health systems management
- health economics
- health sector reform
- health financing
- health resource allocation
- burden of disease methods
- evaluation of health programs
- refugee and humanitarian assistance
- injury prevention and control
- neonatal and child health
- equity and fairness in distribution of health services
- ethics

Our Work

The Health System Program’s principal goal is to improve the capacity of communities and local institutions to deliver the best possible preventive and curative care to their members. Our multidisciplinary faculty work in partnership with local governments and community leaders, ministries of health, community-based health and human service agencies, universities, and research institutes. We have many strong partnerships with institutions across low- and middle-income countries, including universities such as Makerere University in Uganda, and research institutes such as ICDDR,B in Bangladesh.

Our mandate is carried out through research, service, and training with and for the populations being served. Priority is given to populations stressed by economic, social, and political instability, many of which have also been displaced by conflict or natural disasters.

Courses focus on international health; policy analysis; evaluation of national health systems; planning and managing national and global health programs; measures of population health; and key courses in research and evaluation methods, biostatistics, and epidemiology.

Research priority is given to work in low- and middle-income countries and with disadvantaged populations.

Service is provided through technical assistance to ministries of health, international agencies and policy think tanks.

Health Systems faculty and students work with communities and local institutions to

- Determine the impact of existing health resources and delivery systems on health trends
- Strengthen their internal capacity to plan and manage improved health care programs
- Provide training and build the capacity to deliver consistent and high-quality health services at every level (local, regional, and national)
- Develop sustainable community-based interventions to promote future health and well-being
- Encourage strong policy frameworks to sustain health interventions
- Evaluate national, state and local health systems to help plan and manage health programs
- Build institutions for teaching and research in these same areas
- Foster strong collaborative partnerships for improving population health
PhD Program

Abdul Ghaffar, PhD ‘01
Job title: Executive Director
Employer: The Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research, WHO

The Alliance works to make health policy and systems research available and used in developing countries to improve health and health systems. To this end, the Alliance is building WHO’s health systems strategy to facilitate the uptake of the best evidence by health policymakers in the developing world.

Dr. Ghaffar’s advice to International Health students: First, doctoral students should publish as soon as they can. Don’t wait for primary data—secondary data analysis is a great way to learn the scientific process, and it will quickly teach you how to write and disseminate your work.

Secondly, develop your skills. The instrument most associated with medical doctors is a stethoscope; for public health scientists, it’s the computer. The campus is the best place to develop the set of skills you’ll need every day of your scientific career.

For non-native English speakers: As one myself, I want to tell you not to let it be a barrier in your career and studies. Work to speak and write the language well, but don’t let some imperfections limit your aspirations. Remember, most of the world’s people are non-native English speakers.

Prof. for non-U.S. students: Don’t shy away from asking questions. One of the best things about the American system is that it encourages questions, which can lead to great classroom discussions.

Finally, for everyone: A degree from Hopkins takes hard work, and it can take you far. I went to school more than sitting in a classroom and taking exams. In International Health, you’ll have the opportunity to develop lasting relationships with faculty and peers that can help you grow throughout your career.

Dissertation: Measuring the burden of injuries in Pakistan: Epidemiological and policy analysis.

George Pariyo, PhD ‘00
Job title: Senior Specialist Immunization Coverage
Employer: GAVI Alliance

Job description: GAVI’s mission is “Saving children’s lives and protecting people’s health by increasing access to immunization in poor countries.” In support of this mission, I track levels, trends and uncertainty in the estimation of immunization coverage of 79 GAVI-supported countries. I also lead the translation of knowledge related to coverage levels, trends and uncertainty to help inform decision-making and accountability as appropriate. Overall, I help GAVI enhance its ability to verify reported changes in immunization coverage over time and assess the extent to which countries meet their coverage targets for vaccines supported by GAVI.

Advice to International Health students: Johns Hopkins is an intellectually stimulating and rewarding environment. As an International Health student you will not only get first-class education and acquire competencies to analyze global public health challenges and come up with innovative solutions, you will also form lifelong personal and professional friendships with fellow students and faculty who come from all over the world. Remember that a degree is meant to prepare you to face and deal with real-world issues and challenges and is not an end in itself. People will value your Hopkins degree to the extent that they find you knowledgeable, competent and a lifelong learner as you strive to make a contribution to solving or mitigating some of the most intractable and challenging health and development problems in the world. This takes hard work, perseverance and going out there in the field and “getting your hands dirty.”

Dissertation: Decision-making for allocation of resources in decentralized district health systems in Uganda.

Laura Steinhardt, PhD ‘10, MPH ‘02
Job title: Epidemiologist
Employer: CDC

Job description: I help design and carry out research studies on the epidemiology of malaria, including effectiveness of control strategies, such as malaria case management and surveillance, operational research on how best to implement these strategies, and how to measure the progress we are making in reducing the burden of malaria.

Current research: I’m very interested in malaria case management in low-resource settings, and elimination strategies for malaria. As malaria transmission decreases, it will be important to be creative about how we prevent, find, and treat cases of malaria, whether they are symptomatic or not.

Dissertation: Determinants of access to primary health care services in rural Afghanistan.

PhD Program

Nhan Tran, PhD ‘07, MHS ‘04
Job title: Manager of the Alliance for Health Policy & Systems Research, World Health Organization, Health Systems and Services Cluster

Job description: I manage a portfolio of grants for implementation research and I’m responsible for coordinating current programs of work related to implementation research across five departments of WHO. I also lead the development of guidance, curricula, and methods for implementation research, and liaise with donor agencies to help align implementation research priorities.

Current research: One of my current interests is implementation research to identify and overcome barriers to implementation and scale-up of effective interventions for maternal and child health, including the following:

• use of mobile technologies to enhance delivery of health services
• strategies to increase accountability among service providers
• promotion and retention of health workers in rural areas

Master of Science in Public Health (MSPH) Program

MSPH graduates can take on strategic and management roles in health services organizations in a variety of international settings. The curriculum focuses on planning and managing health projects and programs at the community, district, national and global levels. A practicum experience is an important additional component of this degree program. Typical practicum experiences include the following: (1) working in health programs directly serving disadvantaged populations in developing countries, (2) working at an organization’s headquarters or regional office to provide technical support to field programs or to help improve management of an organization’s programs worldwide, and (3) working on a research project related to health systems management.

Academic Advice: I specifically came into the program wanting to come out with a skillset and toolkit, thus I took a lot of practical and methods-based courses. These weren’t always the most “fun” in terms of readings or class discussions, but it was also useful to get the hands-on experience in a classroom environment prior to having to do it on the job.

Bhavya Gowda, MSPH ’11
Organization: Clinton Health Access Initiative
Job Title: Access to Medicines and Diagnostics Program Manager
Location: Maseru, Lesotho

Programmatic Interests: The great part about my job is that I’ve been given the opportunity to touch on a lot of different subject areas. When I first took this position, I thought I was going to focus purely on labs and the ART program. The needs of the Ministry have shifted with time as well as within the organization, and my scope of work has grown to include overseeing tuberculosis and vaccines as well. These two areas of work are vastly different than my experience and knowledge in HIV, so I’ve been great to be exposed to new methodologies and emerging technologies.

Professional Advice: There will be good days and bad days, slow days and fast days. Pause, take a deep breath, and remember to treasure your victories.

Bhavya Gowda, MSPH ’11, in Rwanda

Suzanne Van Hulle, MHS ’08
Job Title: Regional Technical Advisor for Health and HIV for West Africa
Employer: Catholic Relief Services

Job Description: I provide technical assistance to health programs in 13 countries in West Africa, mainly in the area of infectious diseases (including programs in malaria, tuberculosis, HIV and neglected tropical diseases), as well as nutrition and maternal, newborn and child health. Technical assistance can include designing and writing new project proposals, promoting lessons learned and health innovations across the region, and assisting in baseline surveys and evaluations. I also represent CRS regional health programs in partner and donor interactions.

Current Research: Recently, nearly all countries in West Africa have switched their national policies on treatment of malaria. Instead of treating based on symptoms presented, treatment is now based on a positive diagnostic test. I’ll be involved in CRS research on the key determinants of the use and acceptance of these test results. CRS will also be investigating how well communities follow these new rapid diagnostic testing policies. Results from this research will be relevant to community-based malaria programs worldwide.

Academic Advice: I specifically came into the program wanting to come out with a skillset and toolkit, thus I took a lot of practical and methods-based courses. These weren’t always the most “fun” in terms of readings or class discussions, but it was also useful to get the hands-on experience in a classroom environment prior to having to do it on the job.

Eva Leidman, MSPH ’12
Position: ORISE Research Fellow, Emergency Response and Recovery Branch, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Job Description: Our branch focuses on reducing the health (impact) of disasters and complex humanitarian emergencies in partnership with other U.S. government agencies, United Nations agencies, and non-governmental organizations. I support these efforts.

Current Work: My work at the CDC focuses on survey and surveillance methodologies. This includes providing technical support for acute malnutrition surveys and routine surveillance in East Africa, infectious disease surveillance (EWARN) in countries affected by the Syria crisis, and injury surveillance in Iraq.

Advice to current and prospective students: The Hopkins faculty is an unparalleled resource. Find faculty members working on research that interests you and see how you can contribute.

Bhavya Gowda, MSPH ’11, in Rwanda

Suzanne Van Hulle in Eastern Sierra Leone where she was managing a variety of CRS health programs. She is joined by several traditional birth attendants and other influential women in the community.

Van Hulle holding a child in Eastern Sierra Leone where she was managing a variety of CRS health programs. She is joined by several traditional birth attendants and other influential women in the community.

Eva Leidman in Haiti where she worked on an earthquake recovery project with PCI

Photo credit: Janine Schooley
Master of Health Science (MHS) in Health Economics

The Master of Health Science (MHS) in Health Economics provides students with a solid foundation in the methods necessary to promote the efficient and equitable allocation of resources in the provision of preventive and curative medicine across the globe. Courses will include methods such as cost analysis, cost-effectiveness analysis, and cost-benefit approaches. Graduates will find these methods invaluable in the development and evaluation of strategies to promote health and cost-effective health care.

The MHS in Health Economics is a Department-wide degree and is not based in the Health Systems Program; however, many MHS students focus on Health Systems topic areas.

Samantha Clark, MHS in Health Economics '13

Current job title: Health Economist at the Johns Hopkins International Vaccine Access Center (IVAC)

Brief job description: As a member of the Economics and Finance team at IVAC, my work is focused on compiling information on the disease burden, public health impact, and affordability associated with the introduction of vaccines. This information is then used to generate evidence (gaps analysis, strategic demand forecasting, budget impact analysis) which can be presented in the form of an investment case for policy makers.

Current research and programmatic interests: One of my areas of interest involves developing a web-based application that can be used to model the additional costs and benefits associated with a pneumococcal vaccine catch-up campaign. I'm also currently using a strategic demand modeling approach and assessing the additional costs and benefits associated with a pneumococcal vaccine catch-up campaign.

Simrun (Simi) Grewal, MHS in Health Economics '13

Job Title: Health Economist/Research Associate

Employee: Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

Job Description: I utilize economic research and modeling methods to support projects within the Department of International Health. Primarily, I work on the Bill and Melinda Gates-funded Decade of Vaccine Economics (DOVE) project through the International Vaccine Access Center (IVAC), which aims to assess the global impact of vaccine scale-up through research on the economic, programmatic, and public health benefits, program costs, financing, and return on investment of immunization. My research also tries to better understand what contributes to the nutrition, retention and motivation of community health workers.

Simi Grewal in Jaipur, India, where she worked on a study in better understand health behaviors of migrant populations in northern India

Research: My additional research interests include improved measures of equity in healthcare to inform resource allocation and the expanded integration of maternal and child health interventions in economic modeling.

Advice to others: At all stages and in all contexts, people have taught me far more than books alone ever could. Take the time to get to know your peers, colleagues, faculty, and potential mentors—they're incredible!

DrPH Program

Shams El Arifeen, MBBS, DrPH '97

Job Title: Director and Senior Scientist Centre for Child and Adolescent Health

Employer: International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B)

Job description: To direct and lead the research and programs at the Centre for Child and Adolescent Health, 1 of 10 scientific centers at ICDDR,B

Current research: I work on child, neonatal and maternal health, with an emphasis on health services and health systems research, and monitoring and evaluations. What I find most rewarding is being able to work with the national government and civil society and to help make change happen.

Advice to students: A JHSPH degree is a wonderful thing to have, but the skills that you can learn there are exceptional. The school is a great place to learn from both the faculty and the very diverse student body.

Dissertation: Birth weight, intrauterine growth retardation and prematurity: A prospective study of infant growth and survival in the slums of Dhaka, Bangladesh

DrPH Program

The DrPH program prepares students for international leadership positions in public health practice. These entering the program should already have substantial public health experience and, ideally, should have graduate-level training in the field. In the absence of the latter, core courses in the MPH program will be taken as part of the DrPH course work. The DrPH program includes more advanced courses in public health generally and in international public health specifically. The program of study includes a field practicum leading to a dissertation.

The DrPH program is a Department-wide degree and is not based in the Health Systems Program. However, many DrPH students focus on Health Systems topic areas.
The Center for American Indian Health has become a national leader in partnering with tribes to achieve renewed health and well-being for America’s first peoples. Since its origins with Southwestern tribes in the 1980s, the Center’s focus has remained unchanged: It prioritizes strengths-based approaches that foster tribes’ rich physical, cultural and intellectual heritage, and increase the health leadership of tribes through training, employment and professional education. All of the Center’s programs are designed with local community advisory boards to ensure cultural competency and community acceptance.

www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/center-for-american-indian-health

Centers Working with the Health Systems Program

Institute for International Programs (IIP)
IIP works with governments in low-income countries to improve maternal and child health and nutrition by supporting the generation and use of sound evidence for program design and implementation. IIP aims to improve the quality of information available to support public health policies and decision making in maternal and child health and nutrition. The focus is on low-income countries, and on research that produces information to improve programs and policies. IIP is a network of scientists from institutions based in the US and across the globe. www.jhsph.edu/iip

International Center for Maternal and Newborn Health
The Center’s Mission is to promote safe delivery of every newborn baby and the optimal health of mothers and babies from conception through the first most vulnerable weeks of life. The Center is the first of its kind to comprehensively address both maternal and newborn health and survival. It pioneers and evaluates simple, cost-effective strategies to reduce maternal and newborn mortality. Its faculty and students work with international organizations and country governments to implement these proven interventions in low- and middle-income countries. www.jhsph.edu/MaternalNewbornHealth

International Vaccine Access Center (IVAC)
IVAC’s mission is to accelerate global access to life-saving vaccines through development and implementation of evidence-based policies. IVAC’s work to strengthen the evidence base for vaccine introduction includes undertaking targeted, policy-focused research in areas such as disease burden, cost-effectiveness, vaccine policy, demand forecasting and disease epidemiology. www.jhsph.edu/ivac

Johns Hopkins International Injury Research Unit (IIRU)
Through research, collaboration and training, the IIRU strives to identify effective solutions to address the growing burden of injuries in low- and middle-income populations. The IIRU’s faculty, students and collaborators work to influence public policy and practice, and advance the field of injury prevention throughout the world. IIRU work includes a global road safety research and training program based in over 10 countries and one of the largest implementation research studies on drowning in low- and middle-income countries. www.jhsph.edu/IIRU
Quick Facts about the Health Systems Program

Annual student enrollment
- PhD: 4 – 7
- MSPH: 15 – 20
- DrPH: 4 – 8
- MHS: 5 – 10

Countries where students interned in last 2 years: 25+
Countries where Health Systems has conducted research: 50+

Length of programs
- MSPH: 1.5 to 2 years
- PhD and DrPH: 5 years
- MHS: 9 months

Is a master’s degree required for the doctoral programs?
Yes, the PhD program requires a master’s in management or the biological, social or health sciences. The DrPH requires an MSPH, MPH or MHS.

What’s the difference between the MSPH and MPH degree?
The MSPH is a Department-based degree program designed for students who are looking to begin a career in public health. The MSPH includes an internship requirement of a minimum of four months. The MPH is a School-wide degree program. MPH applicants must have a minimum two years of experience in the health field prior to applying.

The two degrees are equivalent in terms of their level of recognition and respect in the field of public health.

What’s the difference between the PhD and DrPH degree?
The DrPH is designed for students with experience in the practice of public health who have already earned their MPH or an equivalent degree and want to further prepare themselves for leadership positions at federal agencies, state and local health departments, nongovernmental organizations, universities, and health care institutions.
The PhD prepares students to become independent investigators in academic and non-academic research institutions, and emphasizes contributions to theory and basic science.

Certificates offered
- For degree and non-degree students: Certificate in Public Health Economics
- Certificate in Public Health Training for American Indian Health Professionals
- For degree students only: Certificate in Vaccine Science and Policy
- Certificate in Humanitarian Assistance