The Evolution of the Master of Public Health at the University of Tasmania

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11th September 2015
History and Vision

Provide high quality public health training and act as a vehicle to improve health by capitalising on the strengths and expertise in Tasmania
The Challenge

To facilitate successful achievement of public health learning outcomes and competencies through an online environment
Course Learning Outcomes

• **To provide specialist education in public health**
  – which comprises a core set of skills and competencies and is supplemented by an option of more specialised areas of interest, which may include epidemiological, environmental health services, and remote and polar health

• **To provide specialist education in the six areas of practice**
  – outlined in the Foundation Competencies for Master of Public Health Graduates in Australia. They are: health monitoring and surveillance, disease prevention and control, health protection, health promotion, health policy planning and management and evidence based professional population health practice

• **To support the student to develop as a reflective practitioner of public health**
  – who is able to engage objectively with public health issues either as individually or as a group member

• **To facilitate a student-centered approach**
  – designed to encourage a breadth of knowledge, depth of understanding, application of skills, synthesis of approaches and originality of ideas within the discipline of public health

• **To challenge traditional concepts of health**
  – and encourage the student to think broadly and laterally about the social, economic, cultural and environmental determinants of health and inequalities and inequities in health at a population level

• **To encourage students to appreciate the complexities of health at a population level**
  – and to draw on a broad knowledge and understanding when developing or contributing to health policy or strategy. To emphasise that improvements in health occur through effective partnership with communities, government, industry, education, health professionals and non-government organisations and highlight the importance and value of a multidisciplinary and collaborative approach to health improvement

• **To encourage an understanding of the fundamental importance of ethics in public health practice**
Key Focus

• An engaging online learning experience

• Content and course materials are accessible via multiple devices, over limited bandwidth, meet accessibility guidelines

• Consistent and coherent presentation and organisation of content and learning activities across the course
Building affective links with students – bonds between students and between students and staff

Online delivery drives need to keep up to date with online education methodologies – can not afford to lag behind best practice

Offers opportunities for students to engage with experts, latest research, and practice
Online Learning

• NOT a deficit model of teaching
• Mandates best practice in course design
• Fosters students to take responsibility for their own learning
• Creates opportunities to embed latest research and topical developments in units
• Opportunities to engage students via multiple learning styles
Building a sense of belonging

- Online student-to-student engagement
- Online student-to-staff engagement

Through:
- Asynchronous discussion boards
- Social media such as Twitter feeds, FB
- Synchronous web-conference tutorials
- Phone contact between staff and students
Content Creation and Presentation Template

• Allows staff to create consistent, high quality, engaging, interactive, accessible content and learning activities, without requiring academic staff to acquire programing or web-design skills
Template Design

• Allows students to engage in learning activities that are embedded in situ into the course content.
• Context rich learning activities
• Maintains student engagement in courses
• Facilitates the inclusion of open resources and latest research
Module Two

Cold - part 1

Learning objectives

At the end of this module students will be able to:

- Describe and apply the concepts of thermal balance and windchill
- Describe normal physiological and metabolic responses to cold
- Describe the processes of cold acclimatisation and adaptation

Thermal balance

Man is a tropical animal, whose body is in homeostasis with the surroundings when the ambient temperature is 27°C. His normal core temperature sits within a very narrow range – which may exhibit diurnal variation (warmer in the afternoon than the morning) and also variation during the menstrual cycle (remember the rhythm method?). However, we can work with a normal core temperature of 37°C. The shell (large muscle groups) is usually a little cooler at 34°C, whereas skin temperature can vary dramatically – usually in the range 25-34°C.

What do we mean by "core" temperature?

The temperature of the vital organs, particularly brain, heart, and lungs.

How might this lead to problems with measuring core temperature?
Template Development Process

Informed by multiple lenses
- Education literature
- Accessibility standards
- Student feedback
- Peer review of course and unit design
- Online teaching experience
Innovations

• Getting students to film themselves role-playing scenarios, with critical reflections

• Opportunities for students to engage in discussion and then critically reflect on the discussion contributions
Evaluation

• Formal university teaching and course feedback forms
• Informal contributions to feedback for each unit
• Surveys of impact on of new technologies on student experience
• Informal feedback directly to staff
Reflections

• Public health education requires close collaboration with practice and this often requires new ways of working

• Coherence across the course requires a team approach at a systems level

• Strengths are also challenges

• Proactive student advisor role is crucial to provide advice re study pathway, motivation etc

• Ongoing evaluation & quality improvement crucial
Reflections

• We have achieved much more than a postgraduate training program in public health

• Huge opportunities ahead if we can continue to drive progress and together achieve more efficient and sustainable health