

THURSDAY CAREERS CHATS

Date of Session: 3/31/11 Title of Session: Careers in Public Health

Alumni Presenter: Jennifer Nieratko Class Year: 1994

Title: Senior Associate Employer: ICF International

Notes from Session:

Now is a great time to enter the field. And Public Health is a multi-disciplinary field, so a liberal arts degree is a great foundation.

Her Background

- American Studies major
- 1st full-time job out of Dickinson was with the Division of Government Relations for the American Psychological Association. She lobbied on mental health issues, such as improving insurance benefits for people with mental illness.
- She then transitioned to working for a senator on the Hill, working specifically on Health, Human Service and Education issues. During this time she started to become aware of her interest in Public Health, so she began taking graduate classes.
- She then moved to Philadelphia and worked for Glaxo Smith Kline (this was the one point in her professional history that she took time away from Public Health – but it was still a relevant field. There are many Pre-Health opportunities in the pharmaceutical industry.)
- She then attended Johns Hopkins and attained her MPH
- For five years she then worked for the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials as the Director of Preparedness, Planning & Response. (This was during the time of Katrina, H1N1, etc. so there was a lot of work around natural disasters and health outbreaks).
- She now works as a consultant. Her current client is a health department with whom she helps plan for Pre-Health incidents.

Overview of Pre-Health Field (there are many areas, but these are some of the most common):

- Health and Policy Management
- Bio statistics
- Epidemiology
- Health Education
- International (popular, but difficult to get into)
- Health Departments (largest PH employer in U.S. – there are city, county, state, and federal organizations)

Types of Industries where Pre-Health Opportunities Exist:

- Government
- Nonprofit
- Anything health related
 - o Pharmaceuticals
 - o Insurance
- Some companies might have work-site wellness programs

Graduate Degree

- Getting into the field without an MPH is hard, most jobs will require it. Volunteer work and internships are good ways of getting related experience and getting your foot in the door without an MPH. Nonprofits might be easier to get into without an MPH. Government will be much more difficult.
- The number of schools offering MPH programs is growing. There are many more academic opportunities now than there used to be.
- Many people have joint degrees – MPH and Nursing, for example.

What you will do on a day-to-day basis depends on the area of public health you work in. For example, people who work in environmental health work entirely in the field. People who do community education work both in the field and in an office setting.

Public Health opportunities are all over the world. D.C. has many opportunities because of the federal government. Public Health has to exist regardless of the location, but the more people there are, the more opportunity there is for Public Health positions (cities).

Salaries widely vary and depend on both the location and the specific industry (for example, non-profit versus pharmaceuticals).

The opportunities that arise through working in Public Health are fantastic – the chance for travel, meeting people (like the President and Miss America!)...you meet amazing people with interesting stories and varied backgrounds.