



# A Community-Based Public Health Externship: An Academic Partnership to Enhance the BSN Student's Experience

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## Abstract

Healthcare organizations, community agencies and academic institutions must accept and embrace a richer role in their community's health by working in collaboration to create new innovative ways to transform healthcare together for better outcomes for populations served.

The Community-Based Public Health Externship is an academic partnership and an innovative educational model between Texas Christian University (TCU) and MHMR of Tarrant County, Texas. BSN students from TCU are placed into diverse MHMRTC community agency settings under the guidance of trained RN preceptors introducing them to health disparities and social issues in public health nursing. Students work side by side with trained public health registered nurses, thereby experiencing the role and practice of the public health nurse first hand.

With the healthcare movement and focus on cost-effective, evidence based care at the lowest cost settings, the nursing profession needs to look at innovative educational methods for new graduate nurses to prepare them to enter public and community health as a first career choice following graduation. Academic partnerships provide opportunities to leverage clinical and financial resources to generate the new knowledge needed for the BSN graduate to be successful as a public health nurse.

Unfortunately, many new graduate nurses are drawn to practice in acute care settings rather than community or public health. Several barriers and challenges exist for the nursing student to enter public health following graduation. Coordinated efforts between

## Purpose and Aim

The design and implementation of the Community-Based Public Health Externship provides the clinical experience to help meet current and future staffing needs of our community and public health agency partners by educating a greater workforce of new graduate nurses who are more fully prepared to enter into a community setting and effectively manage the complex needs of the populations they serve. The aim of the project and research study is to discover if providing an innovative clinical experience, such as the Externship, changed the student nurses' perceptions, beliefs and values concerning working in public health and would they choose public or community health as a first career choice following graduation?

## The Silos We Work In.....

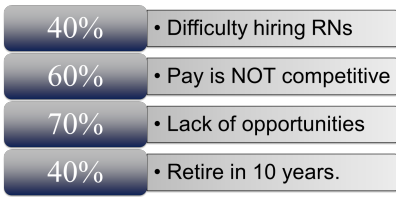
Acute care, Academia, Public & Community Health must look at new ways to collaborate to integrate care across the continuum.



## The Problem

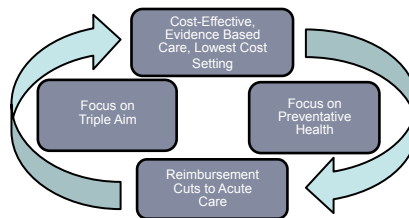
- Lack of RNs choosing public health.
- Academic focus on acute care settings.
- Lack of education for varied RN career choices.
- Barriers & challenges within public health nursing.
- Outdated academic clinical experiences.

## The Alarming State of Public Health Nursing



(University of Michigan, 2012)

## Future Health Care Focus



## Academic Partnership



## Community-Based Public Health Externship

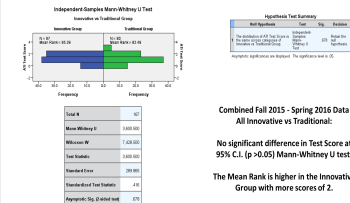
## Research Design

- Descriptive mixed methods research study.
- 4 academic semesters (summer/fall 2015, & spring/fall 2016).
- 2 groups: **Innovative Experimental & Traditional Non- Experimental**
- Randomization of sample**
- Up to 12 students per group; total of 24 students per semester in the study.
- Data collection completed **PRE** and **POST** in clinical practicum experiences.
- Individual and group comparisons are made.

## Data Collection

- Qualitative & Quantitative**
- Student Surveys
- Personal Interviews
- ATI Student Assessments

## ATI Aggregate Scores



## Word Cloud



A total of 273 free text responses to open-ended survey questions. Most prevalent words showing emphasis on community nursing.

## Benefits to the Public Health Nurse

- Engagement, excitement, and renewed pride as a public health nurse. The PHN feels a new sense of value in their profession.
- New emphasis on PHN and value they bring to the community. Students commented on the relationships we built with clients. Preconceived notions concerning students quickly disappeared. Working with the students allowed me to see how valuable public health nursing is to the future of healthcare.
- Student nurses could go straight into public health with critical thinking and critical reasoning skills they learn.
- Students developed a great understanding of the PHN role in the communities healthy.
- Proud to teach these young nurses what I do and how I do it.



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## The Student Voice:

- "The experience has opened my eyes to an entire population that I have little experience with."
- "The public health nurses really have autonomy and learn how to deal with vast situations and circumstances still landing on their feet."
- "Today, I walked over a homeless person who was sleeping on the ground to enter the agency. I had no idea people lived this way."

"You cannot unsee what has been seen."