Module 1:  Using Healthy People 2020 to Improve Population Health

Part 1

Jennifer: Hi, my name is Jennifer Ibrahim, and I am an Associate Professor and the Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of Public Health at Temple University.

Jessica: My name is Jessica Boyer, and I'm an Assistant Professor here at Temple in the Department of Public Health, and I serve as the Associate Director of Graduate Studies.

We are very happy to be here today to introduce you to the Healthy People 2020 online learning modules that are used to help improve population health. We believe that this set of learning modules is going to be a really innovative way for public health students and practitioners alike to be able to incorporate the understanding of Healthy People 2020 into course work and into their practice.

Jennifer: We want to acknowledge our funder, the Association for Prevention Teaching and Research, and also working in conjunction with the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion; it’s been a great opportunity. Also, we want to thank our National Advisory Committee that’s been integral in putting these slides together, making sure that the entire set of learning modules really will have a wide appeal and addresses a wide range of seminal public health topics.

In this first section, I just want to orient you to the overall objectives, the learning objectives for this first module.

First, I'm going to introduce the project to you and tell you a little bit about what led up to this project. Then, we're going to talk about the overarching goals of Healthy People 2020; we're going to talk about the links between data and Healthy People 2020 and the ways that we can use data to track progress on how we’re doing in accomplishing the goals and objectives of Healthy People 2020. And then, we're going to wrap up this first session explaining ways that public health educators can use these modules to more effectively integrate Healthy People 2020 into public health education.

Let's talk a little bit first about the purpose of these modules. One of the big things is to do a better job of orienting public health students – graduate, undergraduate, and continuing education – and actually not just in public health, but across the interdisciplinary fields of health, so including nursing, pharmacy, medicine, social work, a variety of interdisciplinary fields that are working in the area of health to better orient them to Healthy People 2020, what the purpose of that planning process is, and also what the goals are so that we can do a better job of preparing the next generation of public health practitioners and health educators,
doctors, nurses and pharmacists to try to work towards accomplishing those goals and objectives.

The other thing is we want to introduce and give the audience a better sense of what are the different topic areas that are addressed in Healthy People 2020. Over the course of time, since Healthy People, the initiative first began, there has been a change in the range of topics, with new and emerging topics coming on the scene. Even now, we're seeing more new and emerging topics that are being introduced to Healthy People 2020.

So we want to make sure that you understand the broad range of topics that are going to be addressed, and the fact that in this series of 15 modules, there's only so many topics that we can touch on, but we want to give you that broad orientation.

And finally, to make sure that the audience understands how we can use data to evaluate progress towards Healthy People 2020. There are implications for folks in research who are thinking as we talk about these goals, how can we do a good job of pulling in the available data, what additional data might we need, where can we access data that might be outside of the traditional public health realm to do a really good job of thinking through the way of not only are we accomplishing these goals, but the mechanisms by which we are accomplishing these goals.

If you think about progress in public health over the course of time, many people know this article from Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report that looked at the 10 greatest public health achievements in the 20th century, and you can see we’ve really come a long way.

We've made major progress in key areas such as immunizations, doing a better job of ensuring that we are vaccinating the population to try to minimize morbidity and mortality from infectious disease, motor vehicle safety, workplace safety, trying to create a safer environment in which we live; the control of infectious disease.

And also thinking about chronic disease such as heart disease and stroke, and doing a better job of managing those diseases and trying to do a better job of modifying health behaviors to prevent these diseases.

Safer and healthier foods, healthier moms and babies, family planning; fluoridation.

Things like tobacco, a huge area that we've seen major changes, and there's a really great example that we can look at the accomplishments in public health in terms of prevention, cessation, population level interventions, individual level interventions, lots of different areas there.

And certainly to always keep our eyes open to what is emerging in the future directions of public health.
At the same time that we've seen these changes in public health, the accomplishments that we've made, we've also seen a similar trajectory with the Healthy People Initiative. In the next segment of this module, Carter Blakey will talk about the history of Healthy People the initiative, and also where it is today in terms of Healthy People 2020.

But in the same way that we've seen this expansion in the areas that we're focusing on, and the accomplishments and milestones that we're seeing in public health, the same is true of Healthy People 2020. If you were to take the early versions of Healthy People in the 1990s and in the early 2000s and 2010 and do a comparison with Healthy People 2020 today, you can see that there's a really nice job of tracking the progress we've made but constantly reevaluating to see where do we need to continue to devote energy and resources, training and education, such as here in this module, but also looking to see what are the emerging public health issues.

In the current state of public health education, there's a few things that I want to touch on.

We know that there is a large emphasis on competencies-based education, ensuring that the public health education being provided across a range of institutions, both schools and programs of public health, that we're ensuring that that degree in public health, that certification that you have, making sure that individuals are getting a certain range of education.

And the same is true when we talk about other fields, such as nursing, medicine, pharmacy, social work, other areas that are looking at public health issues. It is important that we understand that as we're preparing these individuals for the workforce, they're sufficiently prepared.

There are a number of advising bodies that have come up with what these specific competencies, what the expectations are in order to prepare our students to go out into the field of practice.

We know that public health has changed very much over the course of time. If you looked 20-30 years ago at what was going on in the field of public health, it would be safe to say that there was much more of a confined focus of public health. We had not yet opened up to look at the interdisciplinary connections.

Nowadays, it's not at all uncommon to see programs, many dual-degree programs, such as a Masters of Public Health with Social Work, or with Law or with Medicine or with Podiatry, or you name it. We're recognizing that in order to address the major population health issues today, we need to take an interdisciplinary approach and not just try to go it alone. We work much better in a collaborative type setting.

It's important to always remember the link between education and practice, and the whole purpose here with public health education is that we are trying to prepare our population, our student population, for public health practice and public health research. This is the next
generation of the public health workforce, and so it's important that we think about what are the emerging issues, what are we seeing in public health practice, and how can we pull that back into the education that we are providing.

So you'll see in a lot of the modules that will be coming up, you'll see that we worked very closely to make sure that we have a mix of researchers who are presenting and members of the public health workforce trying to bring in some case studies and examples of the way that we are trying to use Healthy People 2020 as a guiding force in the way we are not only conducting research and education, but literally the way Healthy People 2020 is influencing the decisions made on the street in terms of practice.

And lastly, we're trying to use Healthy People 2020 as a way to guide the future. It's a way for us to prioritize and think about the areas that we want to focus on. We know that in public health there are limited resources, there are only so many things that we can do, only so many populations that we can work with, and so it's important that we need to think about what are our priorities, what are the areas where maybe there's the strongest evidence base to be able to make a difference, or maybe there are disparities and there are certain populations that we need to focus on because there's increased morbidity and mortality or an increased risk for morbidity and mortality.

So really using Healthy People 2020 as a way for us to plan and think towards the future.

I just wanted to touch on some of the major voices, partners in terms of public health education. Obviously, the Association for Prevention Teaching and Research, which is a partner in this initiative; the Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health; the Council on Education for Public Health; and the Society For Public Health Education.

There is a united front in terms of the way that we are trying to improve and sustain evidence-based public health education. Across all of these different groups, we recognize that it is important that Healthy People 2020 can be a guiding principle for us, and that it's important to work together to make sure that we are coordinated in terms of the education that we're trying to put forward.

For example, the Council on Education for Public Health, what I mentioned in terms of the competencies, CEPH puts forward the expected competencies for accredited schools and programs of public health, ensuring that that degree, that credential, carries the same – we have the same understanding of what that education means, so as individuals go out into the workforce, we know what we can expect both in terms of knowledge and understanding but also that skill base that individuals coming from accredited schools and programs of public health have.
Who's the audience for these learning modules? We really tried from the very beginning to think in a very inclusive fashion, to try to think of ways that we could engage numerous audiences on different levels.

So you've already heard, I've mentioned the interdisciplinary aspect, trying our best to make sure that these modules will be useful to folks in public health, in nursing, in medicine, in social work and pharmacy, modules in law, being able to appeal to a very wide audience. We know that there's lots of individuals engaged in public health, but we also wanted to make sure these were useful on a range of levels.

Certainly, I've touched on the notion of this being a – one audience focus being students at both the undergraduate and graduate level. I'm trying to pull Healthy People 2020 into the public health training curriculum in a meaningful way; that it's not simply a module or one class where we talk about what is Healthy People 2020, but trying to integrate it more closely with our training, making sure that as we talk about different topics, we're hailing back to thinking about what are the goals and how far have we come historically in progressing towards those goals.

Also, in terms of continuing education or opportunities to brush-up on particular areas, we think there's a great opportunity for individuals in public health practice and health departments to be able to use these modules to go back and refresh if there's a new area.

For example, if you haven't been working in the area of substance abuse, you can come and review these modules and be able to see what is the evidence base, what are some of the historical trends in this area, and what are some of the emerging issues that we see coming out. If you haven't typically been working in the area of maternal and child health, there's a module that will go through and talk about public health practice, what is actually happening. We have a case study that talks a little bit about ways that we're actually engaging with maternal and child health.

And as I said, many, many different groups. There's a wide range of applications that this could be used for, and we'll talk more in segment four literally about the ways that this could be used for training.

So now, we will move into segment two of this first module, and it's my pleasure to introduce Carter Blakey, who's the Deputy Director of the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, who will be giving you an orientation to Healthy People 2020 and talk a little bit more about what is Healthy People 2020 and where did it come from.

Thank you so much.