

MPH Alumni Newsletter

Winter 2008; Volume 2, Number 3

Public Health Connections from the Last Frontier



Faculty Profile: Gabriel Garcia, PhD, MA, MPH

We are pleased to welcome Dr. Gabe Garcia to the growing ranks of MPH faculty. Dr. Garcia was born in the Philippines and moved to Anchorage when he was 12 years old. He received his Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry at the University of California Davis and later obtained a Master of Arts in Medical Sciences and a Master of Public Health in Social and Behavioral Sciences at Boston University Schools of Medicine and Public Health.

From 2001 to 2003, Dr. Garcia worked at the UAA Institute for Circumpolar Health Studies as a Research Associate. During his earlier university work, he helped establish the foundation for UAA's Master of Public Health program, and also worked as a program evaluator for the statewide Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Prevention Programs. In 2002, he received the Short-Term Service Award from the Alaska Public Health Association.

In 2008, Dr. Garcia received his PhD at the University of California Los Angeles School of Public Health in the Department of Community Health Sciences, with a minor in Cultural Anthropology. He conducted his dissertation

research in the Philippines entitled, "To Smoke or Not to Smoke: Understanding Smoking and Nonsmoking Behaviors among Filipinos." His research interests include health behaviors, chronic disease prevention, media and communication, global health, health disparities, and Asian and Pacific Islander health issues. He has training in survey research studies and quantitative and qualitative methods and analyses.

Dr. Garcia is co-teaching Biostatistics (HS 625) with Dr. Buchan and Program Evaluation (HS 628) with Dr. Johnson this semester. In Spring 2009, he will teach Public Health and Society (HS 605) and Public Health Research Tools and Methods (HS 629). During the summer semester, he will introduce a new course - Practice-Based Qualitative Research Methods (HS 690).

Dr. Garcia loves to sing, dance, read, write, and cook. He wrote, produced, and directed a musical, "A Cry for Freedom," at West High School in Anchorage in 2003. He also once won a Filipino cooking contest in Los Angeles. 👍



MPH Alumni Association:

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MPH exhibit booth at the American Public Health Association (APHA) meeting, San Diego, 2008

(L to R) MPH student Amanda Walch, MPH faculty Dr. Jenny Miller, and MPH staff Ashlyn Antonelli

Visit the MPH web site: <http://health.uaa.alaska.edu/mph/>

International Congress on Circumpolar Health (ICCH)

The International Union for Circumpolar Health is now accepting abstracts for the 14th ICCH. Go online to submit your abstract before January 31, 2009: www.icch2009.com

The ICCH will take place in Yellowknife, NWT, Canada July 11-16, 2009.

For more information, email: icch14@theedge.ca

Or contact Rhonda Johnson
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New Electives Coming in Summer 2009

Plan ahead! The following five new graduate electives (HS A 690) will be offered this summer.

Introduction to Global Health

-Taught by Dr. Nancy Nix

This course is designed to provide an overview of global health issues and determinants of health, primarily in less developed countries.

Public Health & Leadership

-Taught by Dr. Linda Chamberlain

This course provides an overview of leadership styles, with particular emphasis on collaborative practices.

Maternal and Child Health Epidemiology

-Taught by Dr. Jenny Miller

This course addresses public health evaluation within an epidemiologic framework, focusing on maternal and child health at multiple levels.

Practice-Based Qualitative Research Methods

-Taught by Dr. Gabriel Garcia

This course introduces students to the basic principles of qualitative research methods--from problem identification and study design to data collection and analysis.

An International Study Tour: Health and Development in Mongolia

-Taught by Dr. Nancy Nix

This 5-week course includes a 2-week study/travel trip in Mongolia to familiarize students with global health and development in a country in transition. *Application process required, and additional fees apply.*

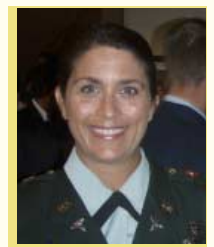
Alumni Profile: Adrienne Ari

Adrienne Ari graduated in the Spring of 2005 and was one of the first two graduates from the MPH program. She is a Major in the U.S. Army Medical Service Corps, and was previously in charge of the Troop Medical Clinic at Fort Richardson. She published her Master's Thesis "Eye Injuries on the Battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan: Public Health Implications" in *Optometry: Journal of the American Optometric Association*. Her work was instrumental in convincing the Department of Defense to continue to issue combat eye protection to deploying service members.

After completing her degree, Adrienne was posted to Fort Rucker, Alabama, the home of Army Aviation. As an optometrist, she was responsible for the management of the occupa-

tional visual requirements for all Army Aviators. In October 2007, Adrienne was selected as the Optometry Residency Director and moved to Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas. Here, she initiated a program to provide neuro-optometric care to the wounded warriors returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with traumatic brain injuries.

Adrienne and her husband Jerry enjoy traveling and scuba diving. They have two sons: Chris, who recently joined the Army and is assigned to South Korea, and Stephen, who is completing his senior year in high school and plans to attend Texas A&M in Galveston. Adrienne is expecting twin girls in January 2009.



Alumni Profile: Lindsay Sanders

Lindsay Sanders received her MPH at UAA in December 2006. Her emphasis was in epidemiology, and her thesis work focused on public health surveillance, specifically within the Alaska Native community. While in graduate school, she also worked for UAA as a research and teaching assistant, as well as a consultant for the Alaska Center for Public Policy.

Currently, Lindsay attends A.T. Still University as a second year medical student. The school is based in Mesa, Arizona, and Lindsay is in Portland completing her second year rotations.

The focus of this particular medical school is graduating physicians who wish to remain in primary care and provide healthcare to underserved populations. In an effort to achieve this goal, the first year goes a full 12 months and is completed in Mesa; the remaining 3 years are completed at various community sites around the country.

Medical school leaves little time for hobbies, but given some occasional time off, Lindsay enjoys reading, traveling, and spending time with her family in Arizona.



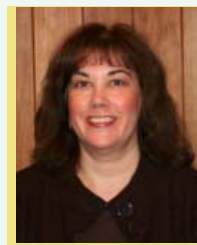
Alumni Profile: Joni Stumpe

Joni Stumpe received her MPH in August 2007. She is a manager at the Fairbanks Pioneer Home, where the average resident is 87 years young. She is an advocate for community seniors, and sits on the board of directors for the North Star Council on Aging. Joni also provides mentoring to Certified Nurse Aides furthering their education through a statewide apprenticeship program offering specialties in long term care.

Joni's thesis involved health promotion through nutrition education, and the program she developed was adopted by the Tanana

Valley Cooperative Extension Service. She continues in this endeavor by teaching sessions of Live Well Alaska, a program that helps people to manage their chronic conditions.

The MPH program opened many doors and sparked new interests for Joni, and she says the hard work was well worth the outcome—a meaningful vocation. Now that she has graduated, Joni provides moral (and financial) support to three sons in college. She also enjoys pursuing her interests in restaurants and retail therapy in the Pacific Northwest.



Coordinator's Corner (continued from back page...)

We are actively preparing several other research and service proposals that support the "scientific investigation of public health issues, and engaging communities in an organized effort to identify, assess, prevent, and mitigate community health challenges." Please keep us in mind as resources and opportunities (and challenges) arise in your own work.

The MPH program is making good progress toward national accreditation. We submitted our draft self-study this fall and are on target for a site visit in Spring 2009.

We continue to attract high-quality applicants, and have more than 60 active students in the graduate program now; we admitted our

largest and most culturally diverse cohort in Fall 2008. Three more students successfully defended their thesis projects this fall, bringing our total number of graduates to 24. We expect at least half a dozen more in Spring 2009. We encourage you to attend these public presentations, along with our evolving MPH Seminar Series.

As always, we welcome your interest, concerns, and suggestions.

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Two Electives Offered Spring 2009

The following two new graduate electives will be offered this spring via Blackboard.

HS A690 Cancer Epidemiology

-Taught by Dr. Betty Buchan, PhD, DFTCB

This course will cover the current definition of cancer and how cancer develops biologically and genetically. It will look at the "who, when, and where" of cancer (its descriptive epidemiology), and the determinants of cancer. The course will also examine major aspects of the relationships between exposure and cancer on human populations.

HS A690 The Epidemiology of Aging

-Taught by Dr. Betty Buchan, PhD, DFTCB

This course will provide an overview of research in the epidemiology of aging using an ecological model approach. This model will demonstrate how age-associated patterns of health, functioning, and longevity in human populations are associated with a dynamic interplay of biologic, behavioral, social, and physical environmental factors.



Coordinator's Corner

Happy holidays! I hope you are preparing for a relaxing winter break with family and friends. As I approach the mid-point of my fifth year as MPH Coordinator, I have much to share.

Several of us recently returned from the American Public Health Association (APHA) meeting in San Diego. A number of UAA faculty and students presented papers and posters; others moderated sessions and participated in business meetings. We were actively recruiting for one new faculty member, answering questions from interested candidates. We anticipate we will fill this position by Summer 2009. And of course, our Dean, Dr. Cheryl Easley, was elected APHA President!

Thanks to everyone who helped staff our UAA MPH Exhibit Booth, including staff member Ashlyn Antonelli, faculty members Dr. Gabriel Garcia and Dr. Jenny Miller, and MPH students Kathy Anderson, Jody Carman, Sara Grosssheusch, Lisa McGuire, Alan Sorum, and Amanda Walch. Visitors loved all the wonderful Alaskan photos (thanks to both our past and our most recent MPH photo contest winners Sheila Wright, Linda Mellman, and Amanda Walch). We fielded a lot of great questions and distributed more "moose pads" than we can count.

Our new faculty are busy wrapping up their first semester--with teaching, service, and

research roles and responsibilities. You will notice several new electives are being offered in Spring and Summer 2009 (see insert for more details). Our faculty is also collaborating on a new summer Tele-behavioral Health course. Stay tuned for more information.

We have also begun to actively build a research agenda consistent with our program mission. Research highlights include:

- Dr. Betty Buchan is working on her Chancellor's grant on "Drug Impaired Drivers in Alaska - A Population-Based Surveillance Project"
- Dr. Gabriel Garcia is working with colleagues to complete a needs assessment with local Asian Pacific Islander (API) leadership in Anchorage to strengthen the foundation for future collaborative and participatory research projects. He is also helping to develop a new seminar series highlighting health issues of local API communities.
- Dr. Jenny Miller is working on a collaborative project with the UAA Center for Human Development and others to identify "Perceived Barriers by Low Income Women with Disabilities to Participation in Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening"
- Dr. Nancy Nix is working with colleagues at the Alaska Section of Epidemiology to complete a "Descriptive Study on the Prevalence and Geographic Distribution of Human Trichinosis in Alaska from 1980-2008."

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