

The Master of Public Health (MPH) Program at the School of Public Health, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Iran

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Abstract

The main aim of the Master of Public Health (MPH) program is to equip the participants with the knowledge and skills essential for better service management and applied (including health system) research. The content of the program is revised and expanded in the last three decades and currently there are different MPH programs included the general MPH, Modular MPH, Medical Ethics MPH and MD-MPH programs. General evaluation and feedback show that the MPH program has been reasonably successful. MPH program enables participants to perform their duties and functions more successfully.

Keywords: *Master, Public Health, Iran, Ethics*

History and Development

In 1952 the Malarialogy Institute was founded in the University of Tehran. The name was subsequently changed to the Institute of Medical Parasitology and Tropical Medicine. Finally, in 1965, the Institute of Public Health Research was established with the aim of conducting research in all fields of public health. With the advancement of health sciences and the importance of public health and prevention in the promotion of community health, this was followed by the establishment of the School of Public Health in 1966. Along with MSPH programs, the MPH program was initiated with 10 participants, selected through an interview, from among applicants introduced by the Ministry of Health. Presently, entry requirements include holding a professional doctoral degree-MD, DDS, DVM, Pharm D-and passing a competitive entrance examination (written, followed by an interview.) The main aim of the program is to equip the participants with the knowledge and skills essential for better service management and applied (including health system) research.

The general MPH program was revised in 1984 and the number of participants increased to 45. In addition, considering the rapid global advancement of health sciences, it was decided to of-

fer options. Thus, in 2004-5 a Medical Ethics option was started, the participants being general physicians. Presently, the following options are also offered for the Ministry of Health personnel holding either a medical degree or an MS in the relevant fields: field research, disaster management, health system reform, reproductive health, environmental health, disease management, and PHC (health network system) management. In addition, options in geriatric health, field epidemiology, and social determinants of health are also in the process of preparation and approval; they will be implemented subsequently.

The MPH Planning Committee (MPHPC)

MPHPC is responsible for all matters related to the MPH program—revising the curriculum, deciding on new options, number of participants to be admitted each year, etc. The membership includes TUMS Vice-Chancellor for Education, SPH Dean and Deputy Dean for Education, 5 SPH faculty members, 2 representatives from the Ministry of Health, and 2 faculty members from the School of Medicine.

The curriculum

The duration of the MPH program is 1.5-2 yr. In the first semester the participants take the core courses (14 credits). In the second semester elective courses are offered and each partici-

part will take electives (12 credits), depending on his/her background and official functions and duties. All participants should, then, pass summer field training. Finally, each participant will have to submit a thesis proposal and start working on it. The curriculum and course work are basically the same for the general MPH, Modular MPH, and MD-MPH programs.

International MPH

An international MPH program, option Malaria Epidemiology, was started in 1975-76, with the collaboration of WHO, basically for applicants from the Region; the medium of instruction was English. The program was run twice, but was then discontinued. A new International MPH program has recently been prepared and approved by TUMS, the main aim being to expand collaboration in the field of public health in the Region. The plan is to admit 21 students.

Medical Ethics MPH

In 2004, some of the MPH students were admitted to pass the relevant courses on ethics issues such as principles of jurisprudence and law, philosophy of Ethics, and the ability of ethical decision-making in practice.

MD-MPH

In 2006 an MD-MPH program was initiated. The main aim is to give medical students a public health vision. The participants (about 40) are selected from among exceptional medical, dental and pharmacy students. The first group has completed their MPH course work and is now working on their theses.

Modular MPH (modular teaching scheme)

Upon request of the Ministry of Health and Medical Education (MOHME), a modular teaching scheme was initiated in September 2008 for the MOHME personnel holding a professional doctoral degree or a MS in a health field. The main aim is provide an opportunity for the MOHME technical personnel to expand their knowledge and skills so that they can improve the quality of the services they offer. The following options are offered: disaster management, health system reform, reproductive health, environmental health, and disease management.

Statistics of current MPH students

Table (1) shows the numbers of current MPH students in SPH:

Table 1: Statistics of current MPH students

MPH Program	Pro-	2006-7		2007-8		2008-9	
		Admitted	Studying	Admitted	Studying	Admitted	Studying
General		57	171	59	177	33	144
MD-MPH		42	42	36	78	–	78
Modular		–	–	163	160	92	244

Conclusion

General evaluation and feedback show that the MPH program has been reasonably successful. A large number of high- and mid-level managers/directors in different parts of MOHME now hold an MPH degree, which enables them to perform their duties and functions more successfully.