

# PREFACE

## INTRODUCTION

The Master of Public Health Program (MPH) at Western University is a 12 month full-time program that incorporates a 12-week practicum. The MPH Program curriculum includes innovations such as case-method learning, Brown Bag seminars, Integrative Workshops, field trips and career counselling. The Brown Bag seminars allow the students to hear from, interact and network with practitioners from the field. The faculty of the MPH Program are drawn from across campus, and represent a broad range of disciplines pertinent to public health.

## TEACHING CASES

Western's MPH Program relies extensively on the case based/experiential method of learning. The Program aims to deliver 60% of pedagogic material using the case-based approach – a unique feature not found in other MPH Programs worldwide. The case method of learning is not about the traditional lecture-style classroom setting, but is about the student being an active part of the learning experience, which means learning by doing. It introduces complex and often ambiguous real-world scenarios into the classroom, forcing students to think and make decisions sometimes with incomplete and inaccurate data.

The case method is a three-stage process that builds on each subsequent step. It starts with individual case preparation, followed by a small group discussion, concluding with a large group discussion (in the classroom) so that the learning objectives are met. To facilitate this process, all students are placed in a learning team of 5-6 members from Day 1 of their journey in the Program. The learning team forms the 'home' of the student for the academic year, and is the basis for peer-support, group and case work.

We view the case method as a vehicle to develop transformational learning, along with the students' leadership skills, teamwork ability, critical thinking capacity, and knowledge of disciplinary perspectives. However, there is a paucity of suitable public health cases to use for this purpose. Case-based pedagogy has been predominantly focused on business cases, which are often not directly suitable for a public health curriculum. In addition, existing health related cases often do not reflect the reality of Canadian and international health systems. Case repositories have few teaching cases that can be used by such programs, creating an opportunity for Western's faculty and practitioner colleagues to develop de novo cases by building on their research and practice experiences.

Along with faculty developed cases, Western has adopted an innovative model of building a catalogue of teaching cases in public health authored by students. As part of the MPH Program's Integrative Learning Experience (capstone course), the overall final deliverable for students is a teaching case and teaching note that is based on their Applied Practice Experience (practicum). Faculty members select the best cases, and work with the students to publish them in the annual ***Western Public Health Casebook***. Our faculty have actively incorporated these student cases in the curriculum, and we often involve the students (now alumni) in co-teaching these cases.

## INTEGRATIVE WORKSHOPS

Each year, we schedule full day ***Integrative Workshops***. The objective of these workshops is to pause and reflect on the past six to eight weeks of learning, and to integrate and synthesize interdisciplinary knowledge and practices learned in the various courses till then. The workshops model a real public health issue facing the community, with student teams having to

make decisions under time pressure, often with imperfect information, and present and justify these decisions to experts. Topics are chosen to complement rather than duplicate the materials being used in the courses, and reflect the expanded expertise available on campus beyond the course faculty members, as well as practice experts and community members. This is a team exercise, where students apply the materials and insights from their courses (in addition to the presentations by experts at the workshop) to answer the question(s) posed. Workshop deliverables vary and may include short reports, presentations to a panel of experts, letters to the editor, blog postings or policy briefs.

### **WESTERN PUBLIC HEALTH CASEBOOK 2018**

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this year's ***Western Public Health Casebook***. Herein you will find teaching cases authored by students, faculty members, and community partners, as well as summaries of the Integrative Workshops that were held in 2016/17. Cases are also available for download at <https://www.schulich.uwo.ca/publichealth/cases/>. Our goal is to create a searchable database of freely available public health cases on our website, for use by any program across the world. We welcome feedback and comments on these cases. To do this, please be in touch via the program's email: [publichealth@schulich.uwo.ca](mailto:publichealth@schulich.uwo.ca).

***–Dr. Amardeep Thind, Director  
Schulich Interfaculty Program in Public Health***