

When Policy Meets Practice: A Trip to Harrisburg

On February 27, 2015 students in the Policy and Advocacy class taught by MPH Program Director, Dr. Robert Simmons, had the privilege of meeting with various distinguished members of the Pennsylvania Department of Health as well as the Executive Director of the House Republicans Health Committee.

We were warmly greeted by Deputy Secretary of Health Planning and Assessment Marty Raniowsky, who opened for Dr. Karen Murphy, the Acting Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health. Dr. Murphy, although being in her position for a matter of weeks, was well-versed and eager to share with us the Department of Health priorities and policies. She was gracious enough to answer our questions, which included a broad range of public health topics.

For the next hour and a half we had an insider's look at the various programs run by the PA Department of Health. We had a question and answer session with Robin Rothermel from the Bureau of Communicable Diseases, Douglas Koszalka from the Bureau of Community Health Systems, Tomas Aguilar from the Bureau of Health Promotion and Risk Reduction, Ram Nambiar from the Bureau of Epidemiology, and Jay Taylor from the Bureau of Health Preparedness. As we left the information session, we all had the feeling that Pennsylvania is at the vanguard of emergency preparedness. Furthermore, they have built a strong framework within which the different public health disciplines can execute their functions effectively both as a unit and individually.

After lunch in the cafeteria, we met with Whitney Krosse, General Counsel and the Executive Director for the House Republican



Top row left to right: Edward Jasper, Martha Romney, Komal Patel

Middle row left to right: Melissa DiCarlo, Jameice Decoster, Audrey Tiberio, Nicole Fernandez, Neda Bionghi, Elizabeth deArmas, Miyori Panis, Karie Youngdahl, Bhagwate Mansi

Bottom row left to right: April Smith, Rishi Thaker, Gabriel Meshekow, Hirsh Sharma, Tara Ketterer, Thao-Ly Phan, Rob Simmons

Health Committee. Ms. Krosse was kind enough to speak to us about upcoming legislative issues. Specifically, issues surrounding physician reimbursement for chemotherapy treatments and welfare assistance for Megan's Law offenders. Again, we were amazed at the generosity of time and energy that was given to our group.

Lastly, we were treated to a personal tour of the Capitol Building, where we not only learned about the various pieces of art and architecture, but also saw the rooms where the real action happens. In addition to where the Senate and House meet, we also saw the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. The stained glass, marble, and tile work were a splendor to behold.

Each of us was inspired by the trip, especially the fact that the Department of Health is run by such an accomplished

and capable woman. We were honored that she recognized Jefferson's ongoing collaboration with the Department. As students, it was heartening to see the state of Public Health today and exciting to know that we will be a part of its future. Lastly, we owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Robert Simmons, without whom this trip would not have been possible.

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