

What's in a Name? JSPH Introduces Master of Science and Certificate Programs in Population Health

The Jefferson School of Population Health first opened its doors to students in September 2009. As the first School of Population Health in the country, there was much discussion – both positive and negative – about the appropriateness of the unusual name. Most were puzzled by the title or clueless as to what it meant. Many told us it was a mistake. Population health is a “fad” – here today and gone tomorrow. We should stick with something more recognizable, like “health policy” or “public health.” Little did these skeptics realize that we were, literally, on the cutting edge of a major revolution in how we think and act about health care.

Health systems in the United States and around the world are confronting ever-rising costs, poor outcomes and economic inefficiencies. Population Health has emerged as a broad-based response to these challenges and is a key component of the Affordable Care Act: it aims to prevent and cure human disease through social interventions that engage the community and the larger society by integrating clinical care and public health practices in a new paradigm of health delivery. This approach differs greatly from conventional health care by replacing the volume of services rendered with an emphasis on value of care delivered.

There is increasing demand for practitioners who can navigate this complex and rapidly changing landscape. A recent analysis of help-wanted postings on a popular employment website (Indeed.com), for example, revealed a 20,000% (!) increase since 2006 in the number of jobs including “population health” in the description. The ads call for experts who can assume leadership and management roles in

Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs) and other integrated healthcare delivery systems, hospitals, healthcare provider organizations, health insurers, third-party administrators, pharmaceutical companies, healthcare consulting firms, government agencies, and community-based advocacy and service organizations.

Responding to this demand, the Jefferson School of Population Health now offers the nation's first graduate programs in population health designed specifically for experienced health practitioners wishing to succeed in this new environment. The Certificate in Population Health provides seasoned health professionals a comprehensive foundation in the essentials of population health – new care-delivery structures, socioeconomic determinants of disease, data analytics, health finance/risk, and the basics of healthcare quality and safety. The Master of Science in Population Health (MS-PopH) offers additional skills required for leadership positions – health care policy development, epidemiology, outcomes analysis, coalition building and stakeholder management. Master's students also develop proficiency in the application of population health skills and principles, culminating in a Capstone project where theory and lessons learned are applied in real-world settings. All coursework taken for the Certificate can be applied to the Master's degree.

In the multi-year journey to prepare this new curriculum, JSPH developed and conducted a survey to identify and weigh key topics that should be included. This detailed survey (125 items taking at least 20 minutes to complete) was sent to more than 8,000 health professionals on the

JSPH contact list, in addition to authors who have published scientific articles in the field. More than 700 professionals took the time to respond and sent 100+ pages of detailed comments. Incorporating this feedback, the resulting population health curriculum builds on public health and clinical care foundations by:

- Connecting prevention, wellness and behavioral health science with healthcare delivery, quality and safety, disease prevention/management and economic issues of value and risk – all in the service of specific populations and sub-populations.
- Stresses socio-economic and cultural factors that determine the health of populations and addresses policies that address the impact of these determinants.
- Employing epidemiology and biostatistics in new ways to analyze clinical data, model disease states, map their incidence, and design social and community interventions.
- Including social, economic and behavioral theory to develop new models of healthcare delivery that stress care coordination, accountability and community engagement.

JSPH's population health programs are designed specifically for working professionals seeking part-time educational opportunities. All courses are offered exclusively online using best practices, asynchronous interactive learning and practitioner faculty with years of experience and recognized expertise. Three 14-week terms per year, beginning in September and ending in July, enable

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MS-PopH CURRICULUM (39 credits)

***U.S. Healthcare Organization
and Delivery (3)***

Essentials of Population Health (3)

***Introduction to Healthcare Quality
and Safety (3)***

Health Economics, Risk & Finance (3)

***Health Informatics & Population
Health Analytics (3)***

***Disease Prevention and
Care Management (3)***

Health Law and Regulatory Issues (3)

*Epidemiology & Evidence for Outcomes
Research in Population Health (3)*

Health Policy: Analysis & Advocacy (3)

*Organization Development &
Change in Health Care (3)*

*Population Health Management
Applications (3)*

Capstone Seminar (3)

Capstone Project (3)

Bold = Certificate (18 credits)

students to complete the Certificate in 12 - 20 months and the Master's degree in two to four+ years, depending on their chosen pace through the program.

For more information, or to sign up for an online information session, [click here](#).

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