

# Western Public Health Casebooks

2021

## Preface

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# 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 various Faculties 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, 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. While case repositories have a growing number of teaching cases that can be used by programs such as ours, there remains 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.

## WESTERN PUBLIC HEALTH CASEBOOK 2021

The 2021 Western Public Health Casebook reflects the diversity in, and challenges of public health practice in the COVID era. Each case offers a unique take on a complex public health issue in these trying times. Readers are encouraged to 'step into the shoes' of the protagonist

and think critically about the complexity and nuances inherent in public health practice. There are no right or wrong answers to each case. In fact, we believe it is the best cases that leave you with more questions than answers. We hope these cases make you think about challenges and better yet, allow you the opportunity to brainstorm meaningful solutions to today's most challenging issues.

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  
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