Livin' on the Edge – Doing and Teaching Epidemiology Outside Top-Ranked Schools of Public Health

Symposium Description:

As the basic science of public health, epidemiology is taught in a wide variety of contexts, from large schools of public health to informal seminars and workshops in other departments. In the spirit of increasing the diversity of the SER Annual Meeting, including representation from a broader range of institutional settings, this symposium delves into the issues and experiences of epidemiologists teaching in less conventional situations. It will explore issues ranging from student recruitment and curriculum development to articulating – and defending – the role of epidemiological research and teaching in a broader biomedical context.

Presentation Titles and Allocated Time:

Introduction: 5 minutes

"Of Humans and Other Animals: Epidemiology in a Veterinary College" – Rebecca Lee Smith: The methods, approaches, ethics, and culture of epidemiology can vary greatly between the human and veterinary fields. How can epidemiology be taught as a One Health discipline, balancing the needs of students studying people with the needs of students studying livestock and wildlife? This talk will present some of the challenges of providing epidemiologic instruction to graduate students in diverse fields in and around a college of veterinary medicine.

"Nursing the Numbers: Epidemiology in a School of Nursing" – Nadia Abuelezam: There is a movement towards the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) as the standard degree for advanced practice nurse practitioners in the United States. The DNP essentials require Epidemiology as one of the core competencies for attaining this degree. This talk will present some of the complications and subtleties of teaching epidemiology to a nursing audience and will discuss some of the strategies used to engage this clinical audience in quantitative science.

"Where the Wet Labs Are: Epidemiology in a Basic Science Heavy Department" – Eric Lofgren: Heavily integrated departments that feature prominent basic science and "wet" research labs, in addition to epidemiology and public health research, present unique challenges and opportunities for epidemiological research and teaching. This talk explores the integration of epidemiological concepts and statistical reasoning into broad-based interdisciplinary coursework, recruitment where students have a large range of both disciplinary backgrounds and interests, and adapting the epidemiology methods sequence to a setting where the expectation is that students will "learn at the bench" – and what one does when the "bench" is a laptop.

"How Low Can You Go? Epidemiology for Undergrads" – Christina Ludema: Though traditionally certification in epidemiologic skills has been conferred through MPH and PhD programs, there are an increasing number of schools offering undergraduate degrees in epidemiology. Curriculum development brings up questions about what interdisciplinary courses provide a firm base on which to build epidemiologic knowledge, how to offer students opportunities to engage in research, and how to prepare students for careers in public health and beyond. This talk will also address some of the fun stuff: harnessing the power of youth, scheduling a syllabus around home football games, and more!

“No Scrubs: Epidemiology in a Medical School” – Julia Simard: In traditional public health settings, epidemiology is a fundamental science at the core of public and population health sciences. In the medical school setting, that is not always appreciated. Epidemiology and the principles of design and bias are relevant whether consuming the evidence as part of a thriving clinical enterprise or interpreting results in a clinical journal club. This talk will present the opportunities and challenges of doing and teaching epidemiology at a Medical School, where students include traditional PhD and master’s students, along with med students and clinical fellows, and clinical colleagues are eager to provide clinical context (and won’t mistake you for a dermatologist).

All speakers will be allocated 15 minutes for their presentation, plus two minutes for questions at the end of each talk.