

What is Public Health?

Public Health refers to society's collective actions to prevent disease, promote health, and reduce disease, disability, injury, and premature death in the population as a whole. It identifies the population's health needs, and provides solutions to address those needs.

Health Protection refers to actions that protect against harmful exposures at home, at work, and in society:

- Ensuring the safety and quality of food, water, air and the general environment
- Preventing the transmission of infectious diseases
- Managing outbreaks and the other incidents which threaten the health of the population.

Health Promotion refers to the "process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health." It moves beyond a focus on individual behavior towards a wide range of social and environmental interventions

Disease Prevention refers to interventions that individuals and communities can take to reduce risk of disease or premature death. It understands that in this world, actions have consequences. For example, when a smoker decides to quit smoking, his risk of cancer will decrease; or if society provides clean water, the number of children who die from diarrhea will decrease.

Public Health, then, aims to provide the **conditions** in which people can be healthy. The main focus is on entire populations and the environment, not on individual patients or diseases.

Public Health complements medical care . . .

Take the example of diabetes. Medical care for diabetes in hospitals and clinics involves prescribing diabetes medications and treating and preventing its complications (eye disease, heart attacks, or kidney disease). The Public Health view, on the other hand, asks the question, "**Where did these diabetes patients come from, and why did they get diabetes in the first place?**"

The answer is that diabetics **come from the community**. Diabetes results from what is happening in the community: homes, work-places, and leisure spaces.

Public Health thinks about diabetes at its source: the things in the community that are leading to people becoming overweight. This is an increasing problem in adults in Kuwait, but is especially a concern among the children.



Public Health would approach this problem first by investigating why so many young children are becoming obese in Kuwait these days. There are many reasons, but one could be that parents or grandparents may view a heavier weight as healthy. Another reason could be that some people may view exercise as difficult, unappealing, not easily available, or not needed. Research is needed to identify and find ways to decrease these "causes of the causes" of diabetes.

One of the responsibilities of Public Health is to intervene in the community to reduce such risky behaviors for disease. This will be the only way to slow the epidemic of diabetes in Kuwait.

You may have heard at a diwaniyya "We need more hospitals and doctors to take care of all the diabetes in Kuwait!" It is true that excellent medical care is vitally important for any country. However, would you agree with the Public Health view that more and better hospitals will never slow the epidemic of diabetes cases which emerge from community and end up in the hospitals and clinics?

Only changing what is happening in the community can do that!



Faculty of Public Health Kuwait University

A Vision for the Future of



Public Health Education in Kuwait



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Faculty of Public Health

Health Sciences Center

Kuwait University



Background

Population health in Kuwait has improved dramatically over the past two generations, with life expectancy at birth increasing from approximately 50 years to 77 years.

This transition has included decreasing death rates from communicable disease and the increasing predominance of noncommunicable diseases like diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and chronic lung diseases.

While many advances have occurred, challenges remain, providing opportunity for further health protection, health promotion, and disease prevention.

It is recognized that a focused effort to provide Public Health education to Kuwait's emerging workforce is essential to address the epidemics of diabetes, obesity, heart disease, and cancer at their roots. The montage below illustrates these roots, which are also called the "Social Determinants of Health"

To fill this need, the Faculty of Public Health (FOPH) at the Kuwait University Health Sciences Center was established by Amiri decree on December 1, 2013.

Vision

To foster leadership in responding to public health challenges in Kuwait and the Gulf region through promoting relevant education, high quality research and evidence-based practice.

Mission

The Faculty of Public Health is committed to health protection and health promotion for all individuals and communities in Kuwait and the Gulf region. This will be achieved by providing relevant professional education and training; by conducting research relevant to national and regional health challenges; by engaging in public health interventions; by fostering health studies so as to promote health literacy throughout the population; and by advocating policies to protect and promote health.

Core Values

The core values of health as a human right are set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and these values will guide all endeavors of the Faculty. There will be specific commitments to the values of social justice, cultural sensitivity, community partnership and empowerment, truthful dissemination of information, excellence in education, professionalism, and evidence-based approaches to public health problems.

Departments

The five founding departments representing the core capacities of the Faculty, and well aligned with international accreditation requirements, include:

- Environmental and Occupational Health
- Epidemiology & Biostatistics
- Health Policy & Management
- Public Health Practice
- Social & Behavioral Sciences

Educational Programs

BSc Degree Program

The Faculty will offer a BSc degree in Health and Community Studies. This program will prepare students for current and new positions within government and private organizations. An important focus will be transferrable skills related to public health, health promotion, research and analysis skills, and community health assessment.

Graduates of the BSc program will be prepared for successful entry into a range of health and community studies positions in the public and private sectors.

Professional and Graduate Studies

The Faculty will build upon the professional MPH degree as its core graduate program, just as it is the core educational program in all Schools of Public Health around the world. In addition to the MPH, individual departments will develop more focused MSc, PhD and DrPH programs.

Continuing Professional Education

A CPE program offers certificate level credentials, based on successful completion of short courses, and geared towards mid-career adult learners. Certificates to be issued include: health policy and management; public health surveillance; community health assessment and inspection; public health interventions; health promotion; research methods; and biostatistics.

Community Outreach Programs

The Faculty aims to engage Kuwait's society through community outreach programs, which will provide a forum for students' involvement, education, and research. This also will enhance the substance of the community services focus of Kuwait University's mission.

