Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What are the benefits of getting an MPH?
A. At Brown, the MPH program prepares students for careers in the public, non-profit, and private sectors. Our goal is to help our students become skilled professionals committed to improving the health of communities by translating rigorous scientific research into sound, evidence-based public health policy and practice.

MPH programs also introduce students to experts, which provide an expanded network of mentors and colleagues in the field of public health. These relationships provide enhanced opportunities for research collaboration and public health practice. Students gain practical experience, knowledge, skills, and an appreciation for the community context of health and health care.

Q. What do people who have an MPH do?
A. There are many career paths associated with the MPH, some of these include:
- International work
- Environmental health; such as regulation of toxic elements in water
- Behavioral health; diversity across populations; ethnic/racial group behaviors
- Health promotion; disease intervention
- Health management
- Community outreach and serving the underserved
- Working with the CDC; regulation of health policy and health education
- Public policy; federal and state government
- Special population groups; aging and gerontology, maternal and child health
- Research
- Private industry: epidemiology, pharmaceuticals, health education

(Terrie Wetle, PhD, Associate Dean of Medicine for Public Health and Public Policy)

A. “I focused on thinking about populations as a community rather than as individuals. I examined questions, such as, what is the prevalence of lead poisoning and are my patients being immunized? I also did research with RIte Care, much of which was policy oriented.” Patrick M. Vivier, MD, PhD, Director of the Brown University Master of Public Health Program

Q. How do freshman start thinking about getting an MPH?
A. “Seek out mentors who are doing it and find out what their career is and why they are doing it. Offer to do a project with them. The PLME program offers a great opportunity for forming long-term relationships with such people.” Anish Mahajan MD ’03, MPH
Q. **How can one get involved in Public Health at Brown?**

A. There are many ways to get involved in Public Health at Brown. Here are some options:

1. **Concentrate in Community Health**
   Brown University undergraduate students may concentrate in Community Health. The Department of Community Health was recently ranked sixth in the nation by U.S. News & World Report. The undergraduate concentration in community health was among the first such majors in the country and now serves as a national model for emerging undergraduate majors.

2. **5-Year AB/MPH**
   The 5-year AB/MPH Degree is a rigorous program in professional public health education for Brown University undergraduates. As undergraduates in the AB/MPH program, students concentrate in Community Health, must qualify for the Honors Track and successfully complete an Honors Thesis.

   Students can apply to the AB/MPH program in the second semester of their sophomore year or during their junior year. Application to the AB/MPH is done through the Graduate School, with review done by the MPH Admissions Committee.

   For more information: [http://med.brown.edu/commhealth/ab](http://med.brown.edu/commhealth/ab)

3. **5-Year MD/MPH**
   Brown medical students are eligible to apply for the 5-Year MD/MPH Program to complete both the MD and the MPH degree in as little as 5 years. The sequencing of coursework and thesis preparation is flexible, however, an additional “MPH year” is necessary, during which the student would complete most of the required MPH courses and begin the MPH thesis. The student could then complete the MPH thesis and any remaining course requirements during the medical school years.

   Medical students can undertake the MPH year before the first, second, third or fourth year of medical school. The most natural timing for the MPH year is between the third and fourth year of medical school. The clinical experience gained in the third year of medical school provides important background that will help students get more out of the MPH courses. Medical students who do the MPH year after their third year are encouraged to do their Medical School longitudinal during the MPH year to maintain continuity of clinical training. Students would then complete the MPH thesis and any remaining MPH coursework during the final year of medical school.

   For more information: [http://med.brown.edu/pubhealth/mph/md](http://med.brown.edu/pubhealth/mph/md)

4. **Medical School Community Health Clerkship**
   Medical students are required to complete a community health clerkship during their third or fourth year to learn about public health.
Q. How do Brown Medical Students earn an MPH from Harvard?
A. The Harvard School of Public Health offers medical students the opportunity to complete a Master of Public Health degree through the MD/MPH Combined Degree Program. Students currently enrolled in MD programs, who have a career interest in public health and/or preventive medicine, are eligible to apply for admission to the MPH program. Medical students undertake the MPH program while on leave of absence between the third and fourth year of medical school. Full-time students normally complete the program in 2 consecutive semesters from September through May. MD/MPH students receive the MPH degree upon successful completion of both programs and conferral of the doctoral degree.

This program is approved by Alpert Medical School, however, students must still apply to the program. More information can be provided by Alexandra Morang, Director of Medical Student Affairs, 863-1616.

http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/academics/master-of-public-health-program/prospective-students/dual-degree-summer-programs/index.html

Q. Can Brown Medical Students go to programs other than Harvard to get the MPH?
A. “Acquiring an MPH at another institution is possible, but it would have to be approved…Many other programs (such as Columbia’s) take 2 years while Harvard’s takes 1 year.” Timothy Empkie, MD, Assistant Dean of Medicine

Q. When is the best time to get an MPH?
A. At Brown, it is recommended to complete the MPH after the third year of medical school. Another option is to do it in lieu of the fourth year, then return to get credit for it toward fourth-year electives, allowing you to graduate with your original class. This option forces students to miss out on medical electives. One could also do it part-time during their career, or take a leave of absence from work. If a student plans on using the degree to help them decide what residency to enter, it is suggested to do it after their third year.

Q. How much does it cost to get an MPH?
A. Tuition costs vary among programs. Some people elect to get an MPH as a resident or a fellow, in which case it might be funded by that program. There are scholarships available, including a scholarship from Harold Berry for male residents of Rhode Island that funds the entire tuition.

- Brown University Master of Public Health Program
  The 2007-2008 academic year tuition for the Brown MPH Program is $31,136 for 7 courses. The Brown MPH Program also offers a limited number of partial scholarships and MPH assistantships, which can help to defray the costs of tuition. MPH assistantships are available for highly qualified students. Students awarded MPH assistantships take at least three courses per semester. The assistantships provide a monthly stipend and a scholarship award. Applicants are automatically considered for both partial scholarships and MPH assistantships as part of the admissions process.
Brown Medical students that enroll in the 5-year MD/MPH Program pay four years of medical school tuition and one year of MPH tuition.

- **Harvard School of Public Health MD/MPH Combined Degree Program**
  Tuition for the academic year 2006-07 was $31,800 per year. Financial Aid at the School of Public Health can come from a variety of sources. Some departments have training grants offering students full tuition plus a stipend. Through need- and merit-based programs, other students are offered grants that range from half to full tuition. To supplement other aid, many students borrow through one or more of the federal educational loan programs and work at part-time jobs at Harvard and in the community. Eligibility for most financial aid requires U.S. citizenship or permanent resident status.

Brown Medical students that enroll in the Harvard MPH Program must pay both tuitions. It is possible for students to get financial aid from both schools.

**Q. Is having an MPH an advantage for applying to residency?**
**A.** “Yes from the perspective of the student evaluating the program, and maybe yes for some specialties at some competitive residency programs.” Timothy Empkie, MD, Assistant Dean of Medicine

**Q. Does interest in patient advocacy and patient rights fit within an MPH?**
**A.** Yes. The key values of the Brown MPH Program are to preserve and enhance the health and well being of human populations by integrating knowledge, skills and data to advance public health. The focus of this mission is the promotion of physical and mental health, and prevention of disease and disability, through the development of new knowledge relevant to public health, the teaching and application of that knowledge, and the translation of data and research findings into information to be used in public health policy and practice. Brown’s approach is to give quantitative skills to allow you to use them. Dr. Wetle teaches Ethics in Public Health, which deals with how to give vulnerable populations advice. There are also a lot of human rights issues being brought to public health.

**Q. Is the MPH just another epidemiology course?**
**A.** It depends on the program. At Brown, MPH students take core courses designed to develop analytical skills and knowledge in key areas of public health. These core courses include epidemiology, biostatistics, social and behavioral health, health services administration, environmental health, and applied research methods. In addition, each student works with an advisor to plan electives, internships, and the development of a thesis.
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