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Georgia Southern Assesses Skills and Capacity for Informatics

November 15, 2016



The 2015 Informatics capacity and Needs Assessment Survey was conducted by Dr. Gulzar Shah, Associate Dean for Research at the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health, on behalf of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO). This study describes the informatics activities performed by and for local health departments.

A majority of local health departments extract data from information systems (69.5%) and use and interpret quantitative (66.4%) and qualitative (55.1%) data. Almost half use geographic information systems (45.0%) or statistical or other analytical software (39.7%). Local health departments were less likely to perform project management (35.8%), business process analysis and redesign (24.0%), and developing requirements for informatics system development (19.7%). Local health departments were most likely to maintain or modify content of a Web site (72.1%). A third of local health departments (35.8%) reported acting as “super users” for their information systems. A significantly

higher proportion of local health departments serving larger jurisdictions (500 000+) and those with shared governance reported conducting informatics activities.

In conclusion, most local health department informatics activities are completed by local health department staff within each department or a central department, but many state health departments also contribute to informatics at the local level. Larger local health departments and those with shared governance were more likely to perform informatics activities. Local health departments need effective leadership, a skilled workforce, strong partnerships, and policies that foster implementation of health information systems to successfully engage in informatics. Local health departments also face important training needs, including data analytics, project management, and geographical information systems, so they can adapt to the increasing availability of electronic data and changes in technology.

The study titled “[Assessing Skills and Capacity for Informatics: Activities Most Commonly Performed by or for Local Health Departments](#),” was published in the Journal of Public Health Management and Practice.

Dr. Gulzar Shah, Associate Dean for Research at Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health at Georgia Southern University was one of the co-authors.

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Georgia Southern Examines Public Health Staff Development Needs in Informatics

November 15, 2016



Public health practice is information-intensive and information-driven. Public health informatics is a nascent discipline, and most public health practitioners lack necessary skills in this area.

The 2015 Informatics capacity and Needs Assessment Survey was conducted by Dr. Gulzar Shah, Associate Dean for Research at the Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health, on behalf of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO). This study describes the informatics activities performed by and for local health departments.

Areas of workforce development and improvement in informatics staff of LHDs included using and interpreting quantitative data, designing and running reports from information systems, using and interpreting qualitative data, using statistical or other analytical software, project management, and using geographical information systems. Significant variation in informatics training needs exists depending on the size of the LHD population and governance type.

In conclusion, substantial training needs exist for LHDs across many areas of informatics ranging from very basic to specialized skills and are related to the size of LHD population and governance type.

The study titled “[Public Health Staff Development Needs in Informatics: Findings From a National Survey of Local Health Departments](#),” was published in the *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice*.

Dr. Kelley Chester, alumni and Dr. Gulzar Shah, Associate Dean for Research at Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health at Georgia Southern University was one of the co-authors.

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