Georgia Southern University Reports on Disease Intervention Specialist Education for the Future: An Analysis of Public Health Curricula

October 24, 2018


The objectives of this study were to (1) determine the degree of alignment between an existing public health curricula and disease intervention specialist (DIS) workforce training needs, (2) assess the appropriateness of public health education for DISs, and (3) identify existing curriculum gaps to inform future DIS training efforts.

Using the iterative comparison analysis process of crosswalking, the researchers compared DIS job tasks and knowledge competencies across a standard Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH)-accredited bachelor of science in public health (BSPH) and master of public health (MPH) program core curricula offered by the Georgia Southern. Four researchers independently coded each DIS task and competency as addressed or not in the curriculum and then discussed all matches and non-matches between coders. Researchers consulted course instructors when necessary, and discussion between researchers continued until agreement was reached on coding.

The BSPH curriculum aligned with 75 percent of the DIS job tasks and 42 percent of the DIS knowledge competencies. The MPH core curriculum aligned with 55 percent of the job tasks and 40 percent of the DIS knowledge competencies. Seven job tasks and 9 knowledge competencies were considered unique to a DIS and would require on-the-job training.

Findings suggest that an accredited public health academic program, grounded in CEPH competencies, could address multiple components of DIS educational preparation. Similar analyses should be conducted at other CEPH-accredited schools and programs of public health to account for variations in curriculum.

Authors are Dr. William A. Mase, Dr. Andrew R. Hansen, Dr. Stacy W. Smallwood, Dr. Gulzar Shah, Ms. Angela H. Peden, and Mr. Ted Mulherin, all from Jiann-Ping Hsu Collage of Public Health, Georgia Southern University, and Dr. Kaye Bender, RN Public Health Accreditation Board.