

PHP End of Fellowship Report

Initial Interest in CSPHPSpecialization

When I joined my Masters of Public Policy program at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, I knew that I wanted to apply for the Collaborative specialization in public health policy with the Dalla Lana School. As a part of my undergraduate degree in Political Science, I wrote my undergraduate thesis on healthcare accessibility for racialized women and more specifically highlighted institutional racism and sexism as factors in the Canadian healthcare system that perpetuate an underdiagnosis of cognitive disabilities of racialized women. Prior to this specialization, this research and my involvement with a non-profit organization supporting children with arthritis deepened my understanding of systemic barriers in healthcare and the importance of delivering high quality healthcare services. Growing up, I also saw firsthand the strengths and challenges of the healthcare system through my grandmother's reliance on the Canadian public healthcare system as a kidney patient. This personal experience, combined with my work in policy research and government relations, reinforced my commitment to contributing to research in health policy and public health policy.

Impact of CSPHP on my Learning and Related Projects

I appreciated the courses and seminars through the CSPHP specialization because I was able to strengthen my technical knowledge about public health policy and how to create tangible policy solutions to pressing public health challenges. As an MPP student, I have been able to gain a clear understanding on how to tackle public policy issues, however, the CSPHP specialization provided me with the opportunity to engage further in my policy area of interest. Tackling public health policy concerns are quite different from other areas of policy, and it was quite helpful to understand effective tools and approaches to tackling these problems. A notable distinction that I did not know prior to the specialization was the differentiation between health policy and public health policy. Through this specialization, I realized that my previous research experience had been more health policy related. However, through course material of CHL5300H with Dr.Schwartz, I learned that there is often overlap between these areas and strong public health policies can help translate into the strong development of health policies. Taking CHL5300H also inspired me to research more into public health initiatives in Ontario and Canada, and I ended up taking an online course offered by the Public Health Ontario on the Introduction to Health Promotions.

Some notable seminars that were of great interest to me were our Rule 48 in the NHL: A Policy Shift and its ongoing impact on player safety Seminar, as well as the Muscle-Building Drugs and Dietary Supplements: Understanding Use and the Policy Landscape sessions. I found both of these sessions to be quite interesting as they aligned with my personal interests in hockey and nutrition. After attending all of the seminars and our days in the Institute, I also found myself analyzing the public health impacts of other policies when taking my MPP courses. For instance, I took a course on Policies for Healthy Cities as a part of my Fall 2024 semester abroad within my MPP degree with the National University of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy. This course examined how urban policy solutions can center public health through effective policy design. An assignment that I worked on in this course was conducting a Desktop Health Impact Assessment for a project

proposal suggesting the relocation of residents from low-income housing estates in Singapore to another area. Through my semester abroad, I broadened my understanding of global policy frameworks and how different governments effectively tackle public health concerns. I was grateful to have taken my PHP courses prior to my semester abroad, as I was able to approach my courses with public health policy knowledge in mind.

Within my Public Health Policy course, I wrote a brief to increase health promotion initiatives to destigmatize invisible illnesses and disabilities. This topic has been of great interest to me and was inspired by my undergraduate thesis. I was excited to be able to revisit this topic and write information in a brief format. In my Social Context for Policy Making class that I took in Fall of 2023, alongside the CHL5300H course, I developed a presentation and report on the impact of climate change on the health and wellbeing of people in the Care economy, with a focus on women and marginalized people. Conducting research in this area opened ideas to the way that climate change can impact one's health in numerous ways. Currently, I am wrapping up my capstone paper for my MPP degree which is focused on enhancing health equity and improving health outcomes by increasing investment in community-based research at the federal level by ensuring that funding reaches grassroots organizations, non-academic institutions, and community-led health initiatives. Within my capstone, I evaluate existing CBR initiatives within the Canada Institute for Health Research and the Public Health Agency of Canada, and propose changes to strengthen these initiatives.

Experience Related to PHP

During my Masters Level co-op during Summer of 2024 with the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation as a Policy Student with the Business Intelligence and Data Analytics team, I was able to lead the coordination of an internal team project that required researching government databases for quantitative and qualitative data on Indigenous quality of life outcomes, data entry, and contextualizing my findings through report writing. While seemingly not directly public health related, this position allowed me to see the importance of collecting data to create evidence based policies. A key issue that I observed during the term was that the Ministry was not being able to help communities that were in more remote areas and did not have the capacity to engage with ministry projects. This highlighted the need for more Community Based Research projects or other initiatives that seek to help vulnerable communities exit perpetuating cycles of harm. As I look for job opportunities post-graduation, I am navigating toward policy analyst roles and public health consulting roles for non-profits and government.

Final Notes

Overall, I greatly enjoyed my time in the CSPHP and would highly recommend it to students at UofT who have public health policy interests. The ability to connect with other graduate students and public health policy professionals, and learn technical skills in how to approach public health policy creation, made my experience in the specialization an enriching addition to my Masters degree. I hope to see the specialization return for students in the future!

