

Lessons Learned from an Environmental Health and Social Justice Class at UCSF

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Planning the Course

- Spring 2014. Four med students meet in the library to talk about what environmental topics are most important to each of them – Climate Change is top of the list.
- Up until this point, at the end of their 1st year, they have had one, one-hour lecture on air pollution and lung disease. They will get one more 1 hour lecture next year on the effect of certain chemicals on fetal development.
- They created a survey and sent it out to their med school class
- 24/153 people responded- likely people who were

Topic	Rating
The effects of climate change on health	4.25
How the US Medical System affects climate change	4.25
Air pollution and health	4.375
Effects of toxins on health	4.417
Environmental Health and Social Justice	4.333
Sustainable agriculture and health	4.333
Effects of radiation on health	4.125

MED SCHOOL ESSENTIAL CORE – is instruction that covers the first 2 years built around 6 core competencies that include Medical Knowledge, Patient Care, Professionalism, Systems Based Practice, Communication Skills, and Practice-Based Learning

Statement	YES	NO
I think Social Responsibility should be a core competency (maybe we could replace or combine with professionalism?)	19	5
I believe Essential Core should address how environment and climate change affect health.	22	2
I believe Essential Core should address the role of physicians, hospitals, and clinics in carbon emissions, water pollution, and waste.	20	4

Class Format



Date	Topic	Speakers
9-17	Intro to Environmental Health & Justice	Gina Solomon, Sara Janssen, Rachel Morello-Frosch
10-1	Air quality, pediatrics, and human development	John Balmes, Mark Miller, Sarah Janssen, Tracey Woodruff
10-15	Energy Extraction, and Human Health	Bob Gould, Zack Wettstein, Linda Rudolph
10-25	Bayview Hunters Point Field trip	Marie Harrison
10-29	Agriculture, food systems, pesticides, and worker health	Daphne Miller, Kim Harley
11-5	Climate change, Healthy health systems: our footprint as practitioners	Kathy Gerwig, Gail Lee
11-8	Richmond Field Trip	Andres Soto
11-19	Field Trip Debrief and Student Presentations	Students

Chevron Refinery Fire August 2012 Richmond, CA



Field Trip to Hunter's Point



Class Demographics

39 unique students participated; 17 registered;
across 3 schools (medical [MS1, MS2], nursing
[PhD, MEPN], pharmacy [P1-4])

15 panelists and/or guest speakers from UCSF,
CalEPA, Berkeley, Kaiser, PSR, Public Health
Institute, GreenAction, Communities for Better
Environments

Favorite Topics

Asthma (5 votes)

Agricultural workers and families (4)

Energy extraction in communities (3)

Chemical exposures (3)

Soil health (2)

Climate change (1)

Food policy (1)

Open spaces,
conservation

Housing

Climate change
and public health
impacts

Susceptible
Populations
Social Justice

CA- and Bay Area-
specific issues

Suggested Additional Topics/ More depth

Food-related topics
(factory farming,
CSAs)

FRACKING

**Community
organizing**

How to engage patients on these topics;
integration into the clinical environment

Chemical Policy

Moving Forward

- Continue Environmental Health Elective
- Try to get some of these topics incorporated into the new UCSF Bridges Curriculum
- Faculty workshop on how to incorporate climate change into their frames of thinking



Previous Successes

- High Value Care- students being taught about the costs of tests and procedures

