PPHS 614 Knowledge translation, communications, and evidence-informed public health leadership

Photo credit: WHO, Geneva

Instructor:
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Schedule:
Tuesdays from 11:35 to 2:25 in Education 211
Class begins January 9

Office hours for students: TBA
Office location: 1134, 11th floor, School of Population and Global Health

Number of credits: 3
Course Website: All material will be available on MyCourses

Course overview:

We are living in an era of epidemics and infodemics. Fake news travels faster than true news. Everything, including junk science, is getting airtime. The public is getting more information from Whatsapp and social media than trusted health agencies and scientists. For example, WHO considers the anti-vaccination movement among the 10 biggest threats to global health.

Bad science, combined with poor science communication and reporting, is eroding public faith in research and the deadly rise of anti-science is a scary phenomenon that everyone in medicine and healthcare must learn to manage. With science under attack, scientists have little choice but to step into the limelight. This includes writing in the media, giving interviews, speaking at public meetings, whether it is giving a TED talk, speaking at a neighbourhood community meeting, addressing parliament, or delivering a speech at the United Nations or World Health Assembly. All health professionals, especially those in public and global health, must learn about media, journalism, communications, advocacy and diplomacy. They should also learn about how to simplify public health messages, how to engage with media, the public, as well as politicians.

Knowledge translation in global and public health is a dynamic and iterative process that includes synthesis, dissemination, exchange, and ethically-sound application of knowledge to policy and programming. This introductory, graduate-level course is designed to provide students with an overview of knowledge translation processes for effective evidence-informed public health leadership and to build knowledge translation, media, communications and advocacy skills. Classes include discussions of background readings, lectures, small group discussions, student presentations, and interactive, hands-on exercises. Several journalists, advocates, policy makers and diplomats will join the class and deliver guest lectures. **Hands-on skill development** would be emphasized throughout the course.

Learning outcomes

1. Understand the complexity of public and global health decision-making and be able to explain how evidence gets translated into policies, and barriers to knowledge translation
2. Understand how the anti-science movement works, its dangers, and the threat it poses for global and public health
3. Understand how mis-information and dis-information is spread and methods to tackle them
4. Be able to communicate effectively about scientific findings to diverse audiences, including health care professionals, other scientists, decision-makers and policy makers, and the lay public.
5. Understand how the media industry works, and learn about how journalists engage with public health professionals and how news outlets deal with health studies and messages
6. Learn practical skills in KT such as how to write a policy brief, op-ed, do a media interview, etc.

Grades:

1. Preparation and presentation of a policy brief: 20%
2. Preparation and presentation of a media/press release: 20%
3. Preparation and presentation of an op-ed or blog post: 20%
4. Preparation and presentation of an intervention/speech at the UN/WHO: 20%
5. Preparation and presentation of public health campaign materials: 20%

Note: Students who plagiarize or who are otherwise academically dishonest will receive a failing grade for the course. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they are aware of and understand plagiarism guidelines.

Course content:

1. The know-do gap in global and public health
2. The rise of anti-science, misinformation and lack of trust in public health
3. Introduction to knowledge synthesis and knowledge translation
4. How policy makers and politicians think and what is necessary to convince them?
5. How to communicate effectively with the public, media, and policy makers
6. How to write for science journals
7. Community participation, engagement, Good Participatory Practice
8. Importance of advocacy in global and public health
9. Role of health diplomacy
10. Learn practical KT skills on how to:
    a. Prepare a policy brief for a policy maker
    b. Write an op-ed or blog post and pitch it to media
    c. Write a media or press release
    d. Organize and conduct a press conference
    e. Use social media for public health messages
    f. Give a TV or radio interview
    g. Record a podcast
    h. Deliver a public speech (e.g. at the UN)
    i. Prepare public health campaign materials such as slogans, posters and infographics
    j. Organize an advocacy campaign
    k. Leverage the art of story telling (films, art, etc)

Guest lecturers

1. Gabby Stern, Director of Communications, World Health Organization
2. Robert Steiner, Director, Dalla Lana Fellowship in Journalism and Health Impact, Univ of Toronto
3. Peter Singer, Senior Advisor, World Health Organization
4. Julia Robinson, Executive Editor, PLOS Global Public Health
5. Stephanie Nolen, Global Health Reporter, New York Times
6. Roxanne Khamsi, Journalist
7. Andre Picard, Journalist, Globe & Mail
8. Annalisa Merelli, Journalist, STAT
9. Safia Ibrahim and Lindsay Sheridan, RESULTS, Canada
10. Elise Legault, Director, ONE Campaign, Canada
11. Christopher Labos, cardiologist, epidemiologist and media commentator
12. Catherine Hankins, Professor, Department of Global and Public Health, McGill University
13. Timothy Caulfield, Professor, University of Alberta
14. David Kaiser, Directeur médical adjoint, Direction régionale de santé publique, Montreal
15. Andrew Bresnahan, Chercheur et conseiller, Polar Knowledge Canada, Governement du Canada
16. Garry Aslanyan, WHO/TDR, and Host, Global Health Matters podcast
17. Jason Clement, Communications Manager, McGill Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences

McGill Policy Statements (selection)
Language of Submission
'In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives.' (Approved by Senate on 21 January 2009). « Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté, sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue. »

Academic Integrity
'McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure'(Approved by Senate on 29 January 2003) (See McGill's guide to academic honesty for more information). « L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le guide pour l'honnêteté académique de McGill.»

'The University Student Assessment Policy exists to ensure fair and equitable academic assessment for all students and to protect students from excessive workloads. All students and instructors are encouraged to review this Policy, which addresses multiple aspects and methods of student assessment, e.g. the timing of evaluation due dates and weighting of final examinations.'

Additional points:
McGill University is committed to maintaining teaching and learning spaces that are respectful and inclusive for all. If you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with the Instructor and the Office for Students with Disabilities, 514-398-6009.

Many students may face mental health challenges that can affect their academic success and their ability to thrive in our campus community. Please reach out for support when you need it; many resources are available on-campus, off-campus, and online.

If you have difficulty affording food or if you lack a safe and stable place to live and believe that this may affect your performance in this course, you can contact the Dean of Students who can connect you with support services.

Land acknowledgement for PPHS 614
McGill University is located in Montréal/Tiohtià:ke in the area of Turtle Island that is now known as Canada. Montréal/Tiohtià:ke has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg Nations. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation (Haudenosaunee) is the traditional custodian of the lands and waters on which Montréal/Tiohtià:ke sits. We acknowledge the colonial origins of Montreal and McGill University and the many ways in which we perpetuate this history in our present day. We encourage everyone to engage in decolonising efforts, beyond just land acknowledgment. We thank the diverse Indigenous peoples whose presence will always mark this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.