

Student Spotlight- Emily Chen!



1. Tell us about yourself.

Hello! My name is Emily Chen and I am a second year MPH student at GPH with a concentration in Public Health Management and Policy. I am from the north shore of Long Island, New York. I completed my undergrad at NYU in 2019 and majored in Biology. I have two brothers, an older one and a younger one. I have a couple of hobbies, including baking and cooking, playing the piano, telling bad jokes, and doing nail art.

2. What do you like about public health?

I like that public health is about preventing disease before it arises. Public health is cool because it is an unsung hero in the sense that no one talks about how important disease prevention is. We seem to care more about treating and curing disease than preventing it altogether. Overall, I like that public health is inherently beneficial to everyone in society.

3. Why are you interested in the field of emergency preparedness and response?

One of my high school friends has worked for FEMA and the American Red Cross. He now works for the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene as a public health advocate. Through reconnecting with him last year and learning about what he has accomplished during the time he has taken off school, I became interested in disaster prevention and preparedness.

4. Can you describe a project or experience that helped you in making a decision to pursue a career in this particular field?

I used to shadow a dentist who would treat dozens of patients who did not perform the proper preventative care for their gums and teeth, and he had to treat all of them while

educating them about the importance of oral health. In a sense, I watched him perform an act of public health promotion.

5. Who do you consider to be vulnerable populations and why?

I consider minority communities to be vulnerable populations because those populations are historically underrepresented and underserved, which makes them more vulnerable to disease and worse health outcomes.

6. What is a current emergency or disaster that you believe is critical to address?

I believe the current COVID-19 pandemic is a disaster that should be critically addressed, especially by the United States. My disaster plan is about how Taiwan learned a set of lessons during their 2003 SARS epidemic and was readily equipped to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. The United States was not readily equipped in any sense. There were PPE shortages, panic buying, and super-spreader events. The U.S. saw the highest case and death rates during this pandemic than any other country, so epidemic preparedness is something that needs to be thoroughly evaluated.

7. How do you handle stress and pressure?

When I am feeling stressed or I am under pressure, I find it best to express those feelings through a good crying session. It usually helps. Other than that, I watch funny YouTube videos to distract myself and spend more time enjoying my hobbies, like baking pies and painting my nails.

8. If you could cure a disease which, would it be and why?

If I could cure a disease, it would be heart disease. Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the U.S., and it would be great to be able lower the death rate and instantly cure clogged arteries and hypertension. Hopefully without heart disease, we can all eat whatever we want without restrictions.

9. Who is your favorite public health figure and why?

My favorite public health figure is Dr. Jonas Salk. He developed the vaccine that eradicated polio. Because of him, we no longer fear polio or see children suffering from it and that is pretty great.

10. What is next for you after you complete your MPH degree?

After I complete my MPH degree, I am going to attend NYU College of Dentistry as a first-year dental student. From there I will hopefully finish and become a full-fledged dentist.