

## Student Spotlight!

### 1. Tell us about yourself

My name is Methyl Grace Barro. I am currently a second-year MPH student concentrating in Global Health. I completed my undergraduate studies at Stony Brook University where I received my BS in Health Science. Before starting my graduate studies at NYU, I worked at Jamaica Hospital Medical Center, where I held various positions in the Emergency Management Department, including the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator for the New York City Department of Health Mental Hygiene's Hospital Preparedness Program. As the EPC, I was responsible for managing the contract deliverables for citywide initiatives focused on healthcare system readiness including increasing surge capacity, coalition building, and community resiliency. I was later promoted to be the Environmental Health and Safety Manager, where I was responsible for creating and maintaining a safe and healthy environment for the patients, visitors, and staff. Although I appreciate the multitude of experiences and opportunities that allowed me to grow professionally, I craved change which led me to finally pursue an MPH.



### 2. What do you like about public health?

I was drawn to public health because it's a multidisciplinary field that focuses on protecting and improving the health of people and their communities. It is a rewarding feeling knowing that you chose a profession that's dedicated and contributes to the wellness of the society. It also allowed me to partially satisfy my family's expectations to be in the medical field since they were probably hoping I would get into nursing – apparently every Filipino's destiny - but once again I am serving the community because I am deathly afraid of needles and probably would have the worst bedside manner.

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

My interest in emergency preparedness and response was incited following the 9/11 attacks and a brief introduction to ICS for a bioterrorism event during my undergraduate studies. I thrive working in fast-paced environments and appreciate how the field introduces you to various scenarios and requires you to constantly think outside of the box.

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

The ultimate nudge that led me to into the emergency preparedness field was interning at the Jamaica Hospital Medical Center, at that time, one of the four Center for Bioterrorism Preparedness Program designated sites within NYC. I was able to participate in a multidisciplinary planning workgroup as they were developing their “Code White - Emergency Response Plan for a Biological Event” following the city’s threat to anthrax.

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

Due to my years in emergency management, children and the elderly are whom I consider vulnerable populations because their specific medical needs are often overlooked during emergency planning and response.

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

I think COVID-19 is the most critical emergency that needs to be continuously addressed at this time. COVID-19 has not only tested and exhausted the nation’s public health capabilities but has caused substantial social and economic impact worldwide. We can only hope that future emerging and infectious disease outbreaks are spearheaded by science rather than political drivers.

**7. How do you handle stress and pressure?**

I have learned the importance of maintaining a work-life balance to minimize stress and pressure. As we live and work in a face-paced society, it is essential to allow ourselves to “turn things off” and dedicate time for ourselves and our loved ones. These moments allow us to clear our minds and be more mentally prepared for the crisis that is bound to happen any second.

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

Although I long for the day we can all sit in a fully reserved restaurant and not needing to wear masks, I would hope to cure cardiovascular diseases above all. Cardiovascular diseases have the highest morbidity and mortality rates across all countries regardless of income level and are the hardest to combat due to the social, economic, and behavioral factors that are heavily integrated into the development of the disease.

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

My favorite public health figures are William and Charles Mayo, the brothers who led the development of the Mayo Clinic, a world-renowned center for medical treatment and research. Despite being the first non-profit physicians and their countless medical advancements that are still widely utilized today, I find them most influential because of their socially conscious approach to their medical practice to always put the needs of the patient first. A belief we should all share as public health practitioners and a personal reminder of why I entered the field, to begin with.

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

As for my future endeavors, I would like to work for an international disaster response organization focused on protecting public health infrastructure from terrorism, infectious disease outbreaks, and natural disasters.