

## Student Spotlight- Cindy Martinez

### 1. Tell us about yourself

I received my BFA in communication/package design at FIT and worked in the marketing/graphics field for 18 years. When the company I was working as a graphics designer closed in 2009 due to the economic implosion; along with a health scare; I discovered my desire to help people. I started as a volunteer at Beth Israel hospital in the nurse staffing office doing data impute and paperwork. During that time, I was interested in nursing and started taking the prerequisite courses at Manhattan Community College (MCC). While taking courses I got a job as a unit secretary in the hospital and saw first-hand what the nurses go through. In 2013, I was taking a psychology course and the professor advised me that I look into public health. Well... I did some research and attended information sessions; one of which was at NYU where I met Zach Maggio; and was introduced to the program and course offerings. In 2014, I enrolled into the NYU Graduate Certificate online program; at the same time; I was hired as a Patient Service Representative at NYU College of Dentistry.



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

I like the fact that there are many opportunities in public health to help people and communities. I discovered as I was in the program that I'm not limited to only healthcare, but non-profit, government and even in a corporation- the opportunities are limitless.

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

I feel that I would have a sense of empowerment with the skills I gained through this course. I remember Superstorm Sandy while I was working in the hospital, the blizzard of 2016 and now this pandemic at my current job; where I felt a sense of helplessness. I feel that these extreme weather conditions and even virus(s) are no longer anomalies and we should be equipped with the skills on how to handle them.

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

I took it upon myself to hold an event in Union Square park, utilizing 4 organizations – it took almost a year to put it together. The 4 organizations were: Mount Sinai Medical Center, Digestive Diseases dept., The Colon Cancer Foundation, The Union Square Partnership and The New York Parks Dept. This event was based on a conversation I had with the director of digestive diseases at Beth Israel hospital. I told him wouldn't it be great to create a colon cancer awareness event in Union Square? he said it's a great idea, go do it.

So, I did. It was a success and it was written up in the Huffington Post:  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/09/10/giant-human-colon-cancer-awareness\\_n\\_3902176.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/09/10/giant-human-colon-cancer-awareness_n_3902176.html)

I told my psychology professor about the event and she advised me to look into public health, she explained that I would be more effective as a public health professional than a nurse.

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

The Latino population; particularly the older generation. The Latino people don't talk about their health, they don't go for health screenings. I witnessed this with my grandmother; and her generation – my grandmother would be at the doctor's office and she didn't disclose pains she had talked about for days.

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

The current coronavirus pandemic; the amount of lives lost is unfathomable, I know of 5 people that has lost their lives, mostly a friend's relative or one of their friends. The disruption of our lives and what the "new normal" will be when we open back up.

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

These days I meditate for at least 5 minutes in the morning. When I feel stressed, I call a friend or family member, because just hearing their voice puts me in a good mood.

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

Colon cancer, it's no longer an old person's disease, it's striking people under 50, I was diagnosed at 45, no family history and no symptoms. By chance I happen to put on the Oprah show instead of the stereo when I came home one day. Dr. Oz was on the Oprah show and he gave his "bad poop, good poop" talk. I recognized that I had all the bad poop symptoms, my open-minded doctor sent me to the gastroenterologist. The gastroenterologist couldn't finish the colonoscopy due to "an obstruction". Surgery removed the tumor.

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

Dr. John Snow, whom I learned about in my epidemiology class. I knew about the cholera outbreak in London and that it was determined that a water pump in SoHo London was involved; but I did not know the backstory. I later learned more about Dr. John Snow and his theory of the cholera transmission through that sub pump.

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

I would love to stay in the NYU family, I love the academic environment and never tire of learning something new.