

Student Spotlight- Isabella Rivers!

1. Tell us about yourself

I am a first/second year MPH student and my concentration is global health. I have grown up all around the world spending my childhood in the UK, Malaysia, and Hong Kong. After graduating with my undergraduate degree I moved to Beijing, China to work in the NGO sector, with a focus on health and foreign NGO consultation. During my time there I recognised the importance of public health which led me to pursue an MPH.

2. What do you like about public health?

Besides the impact public health has at the community level, the public health field can reach global scales. The purpose of public health is to ensure the safety of the public; with such intentions I am inspired by the impact of public health.

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

Emergencies are often unpredictable events that impact the safety and wellbeing of the public; without preparation it is difficult to anticipate the needs of the public and respond to ensure their safety. I believe preparedness is vital to minimize the impact of any emergency.

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

My experience in Beijing pushed me towards a career in public health because I was able to grasp an entirely new awareness of public health issues around the world that I had not previously been exposed to. While these experiences were an accumulation and result of a host of factors such as political environments and population, I feel that my skills might be well matched in improving public health policies.

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

It is hard to identify the most vulnerable population because this can vary depending on what public health concern is being addressed. It is also often the case that those identified as vulnerable populations have compounding social determinants of health that categorise them as vulnerable. Some of the most heavily impacted populations tend to be those of low socio-economic status; especially when facing a natural disaster with limited transport and poor housing; or facing a pandemic.



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

At the current time, the COVID-19 pandemic is front and center, impacting the entire world. I believe the next steps we take are critical to protect as many as possible.

7. How do you handle stress and pressure?

I have always been very capable of handling stress, reminding myself to keep a level head and to remain conscious of my responsibilities in relation to my capabilities is important. Meditation along with a good dose of remembering what is temporary keeps me level.

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

So many diseases come to mind; the flu, Alzheimer's, diabetes. I think that I would still go with the cliché option and cure cancer. The fight against cancer has been so long and is still unfinished. Current treatments for cancer are painful and seriously have a lower quality of life. If I could cure it, I would.

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

I would say Dr Margaret Chan, this one is close to home because she was very influential in managing the SARS outbreak in Hong Kong.

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

I would love to take up a role in the WHO. I believe that a large aspect of global health is global communication; the WHO is a great platform to advocate for this.