

Student Spotlight!-Tiffany Hamil

1. Tell us about yourself

My name is Tiffany and I am currently a DNP student in the College of Nursing at NYU. I graduated with my bachelor's degree in nursing from NYU. I then worked at NYU throughout the Pediatrics department in the NICU, PICU, and general pediatrics floor for 8 years. While, I was working full-time as an RN, I attained by Pediatric Nurse Practitioner degree from Columbia University. I currently work as a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner in the Emergency Department at the Children's Hospital at Montefiore. I chose a career path in nursing after spending my senior year of high school in a program called New Visions. I was able to spend half of the day going to school to take classes to meet the requirements for senior year and the other half of the day going to local hospitals and medical offices shadowing different medical professions to see which one appealed to me the most to pursue as a profession in college. During this time, my aunt was diagnosed with lung cancer, and between witnessing the care her oncology nurses provided her, shadowing various nursing professions through the program, and discussions I had with multiple family members who are also nurses I knew immediately that nursing was where I belonged.



2. What do you like about public health?

What I like most about public health is the way it makes you think and analyze situations. It allows you to see the big picture of any type of problem, population, or disease while trying to find the most effective way to ensure the optimal needs of a population are met. In medicine when I am caring and managing my patients my focus is specifically on them or at most their family, since they are children and every decision I make has to be feasible for the entire family. However, in public health the decision one makes or the work that is studied is able to affect a countless number of people throughout the world. That to me is just magical and impressive, what other field has that capability. None that can immediately come to mind, except PUBLIC HEALTH!

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

Working as a frontline worker during the COVID-19 pandemic made me interested in emergency preparedness and response. Watching everything unfold the way it did from day to day and see my hospital along with many not adequately prepared to handle the magnitude of this epidemic on our patients and others throughout the world made me feel helpless. I wanted to have skills and knowledge I could contribute to finding an effective

solution to the many issues that came up around me. Also, as I am being prepared to be an advanced leader in the nursing field with my doctorate degree, I want to possess certain skills that will not only make me marketable, but valued in my field as well.

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

Recently, there has been an increase in both natural disasters and communicable diseases that have affected a large number of people. Our media is good at broadcasting these situations while they are considered a “hot topic” until it is replaced by something else that appears more interesting to capture their audience. The media may replace them with another story, but I always remember those images, stories, and statistics. I always am curious to what could have caused it or what could have prevented not only that situation, but how can we prevent it from happening again in a different capacity in the future. These are some of the thoughts and questions that plague my mind during the night. Therefore pursuing a career in this particular field helps to be able to be proactive and be part of the solution by finding a way to make a difference while helping many people at the same time.

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

The most vulnerable populations to me are the homeless population, because they are rejected by society and are like our “forgotten” population. Being homeless can happen to any race, gender, ethnicity, or sex for various reasons. The homeless encompasses more than simply being poor, it reflects those who are mentally ill, those who may suffer from PTSD from being a military veteran, someone suffering from drug or alcohol addiction or simply representative of someone who fell on hard times. Yes there are shelters and programs, but they are either unaffordable, overcrowded or not offer long term support to sustain an individual from living on the street. There is definitely a lot that needs to be done for this vulnerable population that currently is not being addressed in our government or medical system.

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

The detention centers where immigrants are being held and reportedly mistreated is a current public health emergency that is not receiving the amount of attention or media focus that it deserves. These places are a breeding host for communicable diseases and mental disease development. Their rights as humans are being neglected to treatment worse than that of animals. These are human beings from young children to adults who are left to fend for themselves in a situation that is currently not looking out for their best interest. There are children being separated from their parents, countless incidents of sexual abuse, and sex trafficking that are being underreported. Also, if and when they leave the detention center they are not given any type of compass to navigate the outside world leaving them vulnerable to adverse or life threatening events.

7. How do you handle stress and pressure?

I handle stress and pressure by finding a healthy balance between remaining calm and tackling whatever situation is causing me to be stressed out. Different ways I handle it are retail therapy (shopping at TJ Maxx and Home Goods 😊) listening to music, working out,

taking a dance class or praying over the situation. Prayer is an invaluable form of meditation that allows one to not only find peace, but gratefulness. Although stress and pressure have negative connotations, it is also important for me to reflect on that stress and pressure and see it as a time of learning or growth in my life. Many times the reason we are going through certain situation or issues in our life is because it is preparing us to mature or find strength we did not know we possessed. When the situation has been resolved and I reflect back I can always see how it took me to new personal heights.

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

While there are many diseases I would like to cure, the one that tops my mind at this time is COVID-19. The amount of lives that have been lost, individuals who have been hospitalized and still living with the effects the disease has left on their body, and the amount of families that are grieving and without enough money to feed their family or pay their bills tugs at my heart strings every day. The toll this disease has taken on the world, calls for a vaccine and a treatment as soon as possible.

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

Dr. Martha May Eliot. I chose this phenomenal woman as my favorite public health figure because she is a pioneer in maternal and child health. She was instrumental in a study about reducing the rate of rickets in children and was able to find that cod-liver oil and sunlight were effective measures in preventing this deforming disease of childhood. Those results would cause rickets to become less common in America by recognizing that giving women Vitamin D supplements in pregnancy would reduce the rate of a child born with rickets. Also, through her work in maternal and child health there was a decline of infant mortality rate across the United States and the beginning of comprehensive maternal and child services, like pre, peri and post-natal, and holistic care. Thanks to individuals like Dr. Eliot who worked tirelessly to make a difference in the lives of countless women and their children, medicine is where it is today and it set the path for the type of medicine I can safely practice and provide to my patients.

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

I am currently not completing my MPH degree. I stumbled upon this class as I was looking for a fascinating elective to take in order to complete my elective requirement for my DNP degree. I love to say that the sky is my limit and the world is my oasis. Therefore, my next steps will be to explore avenues of interest and take chances at opportunities to see where my next professional path will be. I may strongly consider attaining my MPH degree as this course heightened my interest in public health or become certified as a SANE (sexual assault nurse examiner) nurse to be able to provide that type of care to ED patients, since there is not enough in the ED where I work. Still, the possibilities are endless, once I find my passion and enjoy doing whatever comes my way, that is truly what will keep me happy and make me an even better nurse practitioner for my patients and their families.