

People in Public Health:

Fareen Karachiwalla (PGY-4, University of Toronto)



I decided on a career in Public Health & Preventive Medicine because of a number of different factors that serendipitously came together during my schooling. Throughout my clinical training, which has largely been focused on vulnerable and underserved communities in the downtown Toronto core, I have experienced just how influential structural and social factors, like access to the health system, housing, income, access to voting rights, are in determining why some individuals or groups of people are healthier than others. For me, studying public health gives me the opportunity to broaden my skills so I can begin to address these underlying health determinants. It is also one of the few medical specialties where there is a chance to formally study subjects outside the realm of clinical medicine, such as political science and economics, and where one can foreseeably work in non-health sectors like labour and the environment.

Currently, my interests lie in healthy public policy, Social Determinants of Health and mitigating health inequities. My first introduction into this area was during an internship at the WHO where I worked with one of the offshoot groups created as a result of Sir Michael Marmot's Commission on the Social Determinants of Health. While doing my MPH at Johns Hopkins, I developed an

interest in housing policy, specifically in the area of access to affordable housing. My capstone thesis was a review of policies of Local Housing Authorities with respect to the admission of ex-offender populations into subsidized housing in the USA. Other projects I have worked on recently include a systematic review of interventions benefiting the health of those incarcerated, a mixed method paper surveying family physicians in Toronto regarding their experiences providing care to transitioning transgender patients, and methods and best practices to engage stakeholders in the area of home remediation for asthma.

I am in the process of (finally!) learning how to play guitar - something I've wanted to do since undergrad. I also recently traveled to Hawaii where I went scuba diving for the first time ever (psuedo-independently, given my reluctance to let go of the instructor as I dove).