

Darrin D'Agostino, D.O., MPH

What is the difference between public health and population health why did we combine them into one school?

0:05

We decided to combine the two for the school because they both serve different purposes. Population Health is very much focused on communities that have disease or illness. And in those communities, it might be based on certain things that are happening, not just in the community, but societally in that group. Public health is looking at more of a systemic challenge that causes illness and disease in different populations. So it's really a combination of the two that helps us grow the health and wellness within a community.

What is an example of how population health and public health differ?

0:46

So a perfect example of the difference between Population and Public Health would be how we address diabetes in a community. So diabetes from a population health perspective, would be looking at the individuals within the community, and the things within the community that helped drive that, but taking care of those individuals and implementing change across a wider variety of that population, or that community specifically. And we see examples of this where one community may have a higher rate of diabetes or other diseases like asthma and just across town in the different zip code, they actually have less. And so what are those differences? And how are we addressing that? From the public health perspective, we would be addressing this more at a systemic level. So more at the community process. And why say there's more diabetes, and maybe take a look at the number of fast food restaurants and whether or not the area is a food desert. And you can have a lot of food in an area access to food, but have it be the wrong food and have it still be considered a food desert. In those cases, we might develop policy that addresses the lunches and potentially dinners or even breakfasts at local junior High's and high schools for the students helping to address community level policy and help with prepared foods or even access to healthier foods for those individuals that need it. So the process is really one that addresses a community's need. But how you address that need is the difference between population and public health.

Why is there a need for more public and population health experts?

How did the pandemic affect that?

2:31

Well, I think definitely the pandemic has really shone a light on a number of things that have been a challenge within our current health care system, public health and the public health initiatives, which are oftentimes focused on policy and big system wide changes that can help influence the wellness of individuals is only a component of it, but an amazingly important component of keeping communities healthy.

Darrin D'Agostino, D.O., MPH

What programs does this school offer and are there plans for adding more programs in the future?

3:03

We've opened the school of Population and Public Health, and that school will have as its first department, the Department of Public Health, which houses our MPH program, that MPH program is a nationally recognized program. And it's one that we're sharing with all of our schools in multiple ways. What's really interesting about the school of Population and Public Health is it gives us an opportunity to bring other departments in, as well as other programs in order to expand the services and the health care that we're providing out into the community. An example would be a future plan is to develop our Doctor of Public Health degree and also bring in a Bachelors of public health degree.

Every patient facing student will have the opportunity to graduate with a dual degree in public health. Why is this important to offer?

3:50

One of the things we learned through the pandemic is that those individuals that had a background in public health were really able to drive solutions in various situations that look different than taking care of individual patients one on one. One of the things that we've recognized in the United States is that we need a more significant link between public health and public health initiatives and the health care system as we take care of individuals who have different diseases. What we believe is that one of the most important factors leading to the future of healthcare, is that we're able to look at the systemic and systematic change of how we approach illness, as well as how we promote health. And there's no better place to do that than with public health initiatives as well as population health level care.

What impact will this school have for our university and the communities we serve?

4:49

In order to identify what health is we also have to understand what illness is and in order to understand what drives illness, we have to understand what's happening within communities that's developing that illness. So overall, this school is really going to be one of the connectors for all of the health professions that we are delivering degrees in, as well as the communities that we're serving and addressing not just at the individual level illness, but also addressing how to keep populations healthy, and wellness.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

5:27

We're hoping to develop a new kind of thinker in the health professions, we're hoping to develop a new kind of health care provider in all the communities that we're serving. And with that, we're going to create the best possible health care providers, all graduating from TTUHSC.