

# **The Frequency and Characteristics of Academic Health Departments: An Exploratory Study**

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# **Characteristics of the AHD:**

## **Learning Objectives**

By the end of this session, participants will be able to

- Understand how widespread AHDs have become;
- Describe the characteristics of AHDs; and,
- Identify the potential benefits of AHDs.

# **The Academic Health Department: Background**

- The AHD as corollary of what the teaching hospital is to medical/nursing schools
- Recent special issue focus of the *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice*
- This was the third special issue focus on academic-practice linkages in JPHMP since 2000
- Almost all that we know about AHDs comes from individual case examples or case studies...except...

# **The Academic Health Department: Background**

## 2008 NACHHO Profile questions on LHD Collaborative Efforts/Partnerships

<b>LHD Collaborative Efforts</b>	<b>With Colleges/Universities</b>
Any Partnership	88%
Shared Personnel/Resources	28%
Written Agreement	35%
Regular Meetings	22%
Exchange Information	78%

NACCHO 2008 Profile, Module 2	Accredited Schools or Programs of Public Health	Other Four Year Academic Institutions	Two-Year Colleges
LHD staff serve as faculty (regular, adjunct, or guest)	27%	25%	13%
LHD offers student practicums through the institution	44%	47%	22%
Faculty/staff from institution have conducted program evaluation with LHD	19%	22%	6%
Faculty/staff from institution have served in a consulting role for LHD other than in program evaluation	20%	19%	5%
LHD has participated in a research project with the institution	25%	23%	2%
Academic institution staff serve on LHD advisory group	16%	15%	5%
LHD staff serve on an academic institution advisory board	18%	15%	7%

# **The Academic Health Department: Methods**

- Study Design: Web-based, cross-sectional survey; questions underwent cognitive response testing with small sample
- Survey Target: **YOU!** Academic Health Department Learning Community, n= 338
- Survey questions targeting the Academic partner, the Health Department partner, both
- Included 2008 NACCHO Profile questions

## Results

- 110 valid responses from 338 members (RR 32.5%)
- 65 respondents indicating they were currently in an AHD partnership
- 22 with primary appointment in Academia
- 12 with primary appointment in Public Health practice



## Results

Item	Percent
<b>Length of time in AHD partnership (n= 65)</b>	
<b>Under 1 year</b>	5%
<b>2-5 Years</b>	40%
<b>5-10 years</b>	23%
<b>Over 10 years</b>	32%

# Results

<b>Relationship specifications and activities (n=34 )*</b>	
<b>Formal written partnerships</b>	73%
<b>Memorandum of Understanding/Agreement</b>	67%
<b>Letter of Agreement</b>	38%
<b>Contract</b>	38%
<b>Other</b>	17%
<b>Collaborative public health education/training</b>	85%
<b>Joint research projects</b>	64%
<b>Compensation for services provided</b>	36%
<b>Shared personnel</b>	33%
<b>Shared provision of public health services</b>	24%
<b>Shared financial resources</b>	18%
<b>Shared facilities</b>	18%
<b>Other</b>	15%

Importance of Benefits vs. Experienced Benefits of the Academic Health Department (n=57)	Benefit is Very Important	Benefit Experienced to a Large or Very Large Degree	Difference between Importance and Experience of Benefit
Improving the competencies of students	92%	64%	28%
Improving the competencies of public health practitioners	73%	40%	33%
Improving the competencies of faculty	45%	29%	16%
Improving public health graduates' preparation to enter the workforce	87%	59%	28%
Increasing capacity for performing core public health functions	72%	29%	43%
Increasing capacity for implementation of evidence-based interventions in public health practice	68%	38%	30%
Increasing opportunities for applied research addressing local public health issues	57%	40%	17%
Increasing scientific rigor of public health processes and programs	54%	40%	14%
Enhancing capacity for my organization to achieve accreditation	40%	34%	6%
Enhancing opportunities for recruitment of public health practitioners into academic environments	33%	21%	12%

# **The Academic Health Department Summary of Findings**

- 1. One-third of AHDs studied have been in existence for over 10 years.**
- 2. Almost 2/3's of AHDs are actively conducting joint research activities**
- 3. Engagement between public health practice and academia in AHDs is not limited to accredited schools or programs of public health**

# **The Academic Health Department Summary of Findings**

4. Beyond the value that AHD partnerships bring to improving the competencies of students and public health practitioners:

- almost half of AHDs indicated that improving the competencies of faculty was very important
- nearly a third indicated that such benefits were being experienced to a large or very large degree.

# **The Academic Health Department**

## **Limitations:**

1. Small sample size for some subgroups limits both analysis and interpretation
2. No certain method to determine a denominator for calculating the response rate
3. Possible selection bias because the members of the AHDLC may be different in attitudes about academic-practice linkages compared to non-members
4. May have been duplicate answers – e.g., responses from both the academic and practice partners from the same AHD
5. Data were self-reported, with no attempt to independently verify the accuracy of information provided

# **The Academic Health Department**

## **Next Steps:**

- 1. Explore better methods to document the prevalence of AHDs.**
- 2. Look for opportunities to repeat the 2008 NACCHO questions**
- 3. Develop a process for establishing a research agenda for the AHD**

# References

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# **The Academic Health Department**

## **Questions for Discussion**

- 1. What else would you like to know about the study or findings?**
- 2. How could we have increased participation/response from AHDLC?**
- 3. How does your AHD experience differ from what you have heard today?**