

Sasakawa Nursing Fellow 2023 Progress Report

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1. Background and Academic Goal

I am a first-year student at Rollins School of Public Health in the Behavioral, Social, and Health Education Sciences Department. In my experience as a home health mental health and psychiatric nurse, I encountered challenges in the field of improving health and quality of life for individuals with mental health illnesses, including insufficient support for mental health providers, which leads to burnout, ineffective collaboration with stakeholders in the community, and a lack of sufficient education for mental health providers. Therefore, my goal is to improve mental health and psychiatric health program and system in the field of health care policy to enhance the quality of life for people with mental health illness and prevent mental health illness to address these issues. To achieve this goal, my purpose in graduate school is to acquire knowledge of psychiatric healthcare policies that consider culture, politics, economy, religion, and the U.S. health system. In addition, I aim to develop skills for quantitative and qualitative research as well as policy recommendations to the public health sector.

2. Progress for Academic Goal

To achieve the above goals, there were my first year of five objectives.

1) Understand the comprehensive overview of public health

Through mainly the history of public health class and other classes, I gained insight into the history of public health in the U.S. and how to cope with public health problems and solutions, both successful and failed. In addition, race history has such a significant impact on individual health that people cannot prevent or change the disease. I was impressed by the Weathering Theory, which states that various stressors, including chronic, structural, social, and environmental stresses, influence health, diseases, and longevity (Geronimus et al., 2019b). By enhancing the overview of public health in the U.S., I was aware that Japan had quite successful outcomes regarding public health in terms of vaccination, sanitation, and mortality rate for infants and pregnant women. However, I have noticed that although there have been numerous successful examples in practice, the academic development of public health in Japan may not be as advanced as desired. Therefore, it is significant for me to gain an understanding of the history of public health and to dive deep into academic aspects of public health in Japan next year.

2) Acquire skills in research, which include both quantitative and qualitative data analysis and draft a research proposal.

Throughout my first year of school, I acquired fundamental skills in research, including literature review, research methods, and quantitative and qualitative analysis. I

learned how to collect relevant articles to conduct literature reviews, plan studies, including sampling, study design, measurement, and procedure, and analyze data for both quantitative and qualitative studies. Additionally, I gained knowledge of statistics and epidemiology, which are critical for developing a rigorous research plan and analyzing the data effectively. Additionally, I expanded my knowledge of integrating theoretical frameworks into conceptual models and applying theory to both research and public health intervention. Specifically, studying the social-ecological model, in which the interaction between individuals, the interpersonal, community / organizational, and macro / social levels affect health (Golden et al., 2015), helped to figure out how to strategically intervene in health promotion. This approach enables a focus on the specific levels that demand attention in public health. Having acquired foundational research skills, I aim to apply these skills in conducting research and employing theoretical frameworks in my studies for next year.

3) Gain insight into the public mental health landscape in the U.S., including the mental health system and policy through mental health nursing, and the similarities and differences between the U.S. and Japan.

To gain perspective of public mental health, I am on track for a mental health certificate. In comparing mental health perspectives between the U.S. and Japan, I noticed both similarities and differences. Even though Japan and the U.S. have different healthcare care systems, the fundamental treatment and services for individuals with mental health illnesses, such as housing, employment, and peer support, and stigma for mental health appear similar. However, while counseling is standard care in the U.S., seeking such service is challenging in Japan. In addition, the opioid crisis is a massive issue in the U.S., particularly with increasing adolescent overdose. A harm reduction strategy is a standard solution for the opioid crisis, including providing a safe place and clean injections to reduce the risk of spreading infectious disease and overdose.

Moreover, I recognized the differing perspectives and role of nursing and public health in addressing mental health problems through classes. I studied through mental health nursing class at the nursing department regarding almost treatment for people with mental health disorders, while the prevention of mental and behavioral disorders, especially system or health promotion, in public health class. Although treatment is critical for mental health nursing, I believe services and promotion are also essential for nurses.

Furthermore, the mental nursing class curriculum in the U.S. differs somewhat from Japan in terms of studying deep into substance disorders, personality disorders, and eating disorders. I believe that Japan should deepen its education on these topics as

they pose significant challenges in the field. I gained insight into mental health in the U.S. and the differences between both countries but not global public mental health. Therefore, I will gain insight into global public mental health next year.

4) Develop the skills for practical cooperation in an international setting, particularly the workplace.

One of my top priorities is practical cooperation with an international team. The process has involved developing communication skills and understanding my role within the international environment through active participation in group discussions and collaborative class projects. There were projects to address health problems by working with a multidisciplinary team, including medical and nursing school. Due to the English barrier, I felt a gap between my role in the team in English and my role in my native language, but I could contribute to my team by finding what I could do. I was figuring out what I could do in the team because my roles had to be decided in short meetings. As the meetings went on, I found out what materials were missing, looked for roles where I could contribute to the team, and actively spoke up. This experience taught me that communicating with team members, even trivial matters, is crucial. I will continue to find my role in the team through practicum under different cultures and contribute to the multidisciplinary, international team.

5) Through applied practice experience, experience the practice of the public health intervention.

I have not yet had applied practice experience. However, I will intern at The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), headquarters in Amman, for 10 weeks from May to July 2024. I will implement the research regarding the strengths and challenges faced by the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Service (MHPSS) program in UNRWA. Through this practicum, I aim to understand the actual research process and the challenges encountered in the field.

3. Objectives in second year (August 2024 – May 2025)

- 1) Understand history and academic aspects of public health in Japan.
- 2) Apply research skills in conducting research and employing theoretical frameworks in my thesis.
- 3) Gain insight into global public mental health
- 4) Enhance my communication skills through applied practicum experience and research under different culture
- 5) Understand the actual research process and the challenges encountered in the field

4. Living Aspect

Emory University is located in Atlanta, Georgia, in the U.S. People of various races live here. According to the United States Census Bureau (n.d.), The large races were African American (47.7%), White (Non-Hispanic) (39.1%), Asian (4.99%), and White (Hispanic) (1.96) in 2021. Therefore, respecting cultural differences is vital to success in improving people's health. I participated in various events such as Easter, Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas and learned the meanings of the events. Additionally, I live with a lesbian married couple. In the U.S., it is legal to marry a gay couple. My roommates look happy, and their families' acceptance of LGBTQ+ seems to be good. There is a better understanding and acceptance of LGBTQ+ in the U.S. in terms of legal recognition and societal acceptance. However, Moagi et al. (2021) noted that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people have poorer mental health outcomes rather than heterosexual and cis-gendered people. In Japan, health problems for LGBTQ+ are not commonly addressed due to individuals hiding their true identities due to stigma. However, I believe that there is a significant need for support and awareness within society for LGBTQ individuals, as many may require assistance. It is critical to improve awareness and understanding to support the LGBTQ+ community better. Moreover, I could see how the social determinants of health affect their health through living in Atlanta. If you do not have a car, it is difficult to access places where people need to go, such as grocery stores, clinics, and work. Around Emory University is a relatively safe area where it is possible to walk alone during the day. However, I heard about the shooting at the hospital and watched the left syringe downtown. Therefore, it made me realize that the environment in which one lives also significantly impacts health.

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