

PhD – Public Health

General Description and Aims

“Public Health” is a multidisciplinary research area integrating medical, natural, social and cultural sciences. Supplementing biomedical knowledge, a variety of different research methods are applied to collect and to assess data related to health and disease, to demonstrate historical and current impacts of social, environmental and occupational factors on health and disease, to analyze the importance of these relationships at the population level, and to design and assess public and occupational preventive measures, health promotion programs, improved health care systems, and programs of behavioral risk reduction.

It is the aim of the Doctoral Program of Applied Medical Science on "Public Health" to train young scientists and professionals of Public Health in its broadest sense for independent and collaborative scientific work in medical and associated professions. The symbiosis of science and practice will be accomplished by combining scientific experience and guidance with practice seminars. As a result, graduates will be prepared to apply scientific and practical methods in his/her profession in order to continuously advance professional practice and effectiveness, to take responsibility for improving public health and to promote it by application-oriented research projects. In addition, graduates will be trained in presenting research to other specialists in the field and to educate laypersons likewise.

Public Health is a broad area of research and practice and consequently topics that are covered in the Doctoral Program are related to diverse areas of clinical and theoretical medicine as well as other sciences such as history, sociology, psychology, economy, physics, chemistry, and biology. In particular analysis of the impact of chemical, physical, and biological agents in the environment and at workplaces on health and disease; the importance of lifestyle in relation to pathogenesis and the impact of behavior modification for preventive purposes; the investigation of historical, social, and ethnological conditions of health and disease; evaluation of public health settings and health systems research; health economics of institutions and programs within the health system as well as of therapeutic and preventive interventions; promotion of compliance and competence of patients; development and application of statistical and epidemiological methods for the analysis of exogenous and endogenous factors and their relation to health relevant endpoints; investigation of psychosocial factors in general and at workplaces with respect to functional disturbances and the pathogenesis of circulatory, endocrinological, psychiatric diseases, and neoplasms; suicide causes and prevention; investigation of age and gender related differences of disease prevalence, prevention and other health relevant aspects; problems of health care for special segments of the population (e.g. immigrants).

The lecturers and investigators of this doctoral study program work in diverse areas from basic sciences to applied and clinical disciplines and provide opportunities for scientific research in diverse areas of the field of public health. Thematically, the program comprises mainly application oriented theses from translational research to basic research approaches of health risk assessment.

Methodologically, the spectrum comprises a broad array of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, integrating physiological, psychological, toxicological, biochemical, and physical methods for experimental, epidemiological and field studies.

In the framework of this doctoral study, the student will scientifically work in a well defined thematic segment under supervision of an experienced principal investigator. Aim of the scientific work is the compilation of a doctoral thesis. In addition, the student will have the possibilities to gain theoretical knowledge in public health in a broad sense and to become familiar with various methods of investigation, e.g. in basic seminars. Own scientific works will be accompanied by critical discussion of scientific results from other groups in journal clubs. Current research projects of involved groups will be discussed in thesis seminars. Practical seminars are specific to the Applied Doctoral Study Program. Practical seminars will give guidance to professional application of modern achievements and prepare for dissemination of current knowledge to laypersons. These instruments will put own scientific work into the context of other scientific and practical achievements to promote skilled independent work and application of scientific methods. Furthermore, practical and thesis seminars advance students' presentation skills.

It is emphasized that the current version of the program with its contributing principal investigators and lecturers is regarded as a preliminary nucleus. The program is designed to integrate more teachers and institutions in order to cover the field of public health in all theoretical and practical aspects.

Program-Coordinator:

Michael KUNDI, Associate Professor

Institute of Environmental Health,
Center for Public Health,
Medical University of Vienna,
Kinderspitalgasse 15, 1090 Vienna, Austria;

phone: +431-40160-34900; fax: +431-40160-934903

E-mail: michael.kundi@meduniwien.ac.at

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Univ.-Prof. Dr. Judit SIMON

Medical University of Vienna
Centre for Public Health
Department of Health Economics
Kinderspitalgasse 15/1/Room 138B
1090 Vienna, Austria

phone: 0043-1-40160 - 34841

E-Mail: judit.simon@meduniwien.ac.at