This unit introduces students to the methods by which evidence is translated, used and abused when governments make decisions affecting public health. Students will become familiar with the main tools used by health economists and policy analysts. The unit will emphasize the role of different forms of evidence and values for priority-setting and policy-making.

Unit technical content is unified by common themes and case studies. Students will apply methods and principles of health economics e.g. resource scarcity, opportunity cost, efficiency and equity to practical real-life examples (including specific Indigenous health issues) to critically consider the role of economic evidence in health decision-making in Australia.

Students will then use policy analysis methods to critically examine the Australian health care system and decision-making in public health. The unit will pay particular attention to questions of power e.g. the role of politics, industry, professional and consumer interests in shaping public health outcomes. We will also look at questions of equity, including gender and the position of Indigenous peoples. Finally, we will look at how evidence is framed and used in decision-making.

Teaching will make use of contemporary case studies so students learn how technical analytical tools are used in practical examples of policy development, decision-making and public debate.

The unit gives public health students the essential basic knowledge of both disciplines (health economics and health policy) and lays the groundwork for more advanced studies.

Aims

- To introduce students to the basic concepts and methods of health economics.
- To introduce students to the basic concepts and methods of health policy analysis.
- To provide an understanding of how these two approaches can be used to improve decision making processes in public health.
Learning objectives

By the end of this unit, students should be able to:

- Apply the concepts and methodology of health economic analysis to problems in contemporary public health
- Apply the concepts and methodology of health policy analysis to problems in contemporary public health
- Describe and apply the principle of opportunity cost to public health resource allocation through the use of economic evaluation
- Identify and analyse contexts in which health policy decisions are made; how priorities are set and how issues are framed

Content

Day 1

- Introduction to health economics
- Lectures from health economics staff introducing principal problems, concepts and methods (as above)
- Case study: the economic evaluation of a public health intervention

Day 2

- Lectures from health policy staff introducing principal problems, concepts and methods (as above)
- Case study: the decision to implement the intervention, evidence, interests and processes.

Instructional format

On campus: block mode: 2 day face to face workshop

OR

Distance: online lectures, online video of workshop discussion panels, online discussions (asynchronous, not in real time)

Assessment

Take home exam 2000 words 100%

Learning materials

Learning materials will be provided.

Notes