

Paul Chekuri

M.P.H. Candidate, Health Policy Track

paul.v.chekuri@vanderbilt.edu

Practicum Site: TennCare

Practicum Site Supervisor: Ed Hickey, M.S.W., M.S., M.M.H.C.

A Summer Internship with the Health Care Informatics Team of Tennessee's Medicaid Department



Introduction: Health informatics lies at the intersection of public health and information technologies. To gain experience in this field, the main objective of this practicum is to learn how informaticians work with other public health leaders to create systems that allow for efficient information flow, policy implementation, and data visualization. To accomplish this objective, a summer internship with the Health Care Informatics (HCI) team of Tennessee's Medicaid department (TennCare) was completed.

Methods: The first step of the internship was to learn how to code with SQL and in what way to use Tableau for data analytics. These skills were developed under the training of both units of the HCI team: the Program Integrity unit that specializes in data mining for instances of Medicaid fraud, and the General Analytics unit that specializes in creating enrollment and fiscal reports as well as reports that analyze the impact and quality of health policies on Medicaid enrollees.

Results: Attending meetings with the site supervisor regarding the development of TennCare's data ecosystem and an automated reporting system for internal and partner stakeholders; learning how to code with SQL/SAS; and gaining an understanding of how to interpret public health information data helped to become familiarized with multiple projects and endeavors of the HCI team. This experience was then used to complete special projects involving reorganizing data from the Census Bureau's 5-year ACS estimates for health insurance coverage, creating a TN hospital closure dashboard in Tableau, and querying information regarding the Medicaid unwinding and terminations.

Conclusions: The summer internship ended with successful learning of how to pull information from databases using SQL and creating data visualizations using Tableau. By gaining both these skillsets and experiencing how informaticians coordinated with other health and IT specialists, the main objective of the practicum was completed.