

Lars Blackmore



THE DARTMOUTH INSTITUTE OFFERS NEW ONLINE MPH

THE INAUGURAL CLASS OF THE DARTMOUTH INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH POLICY AND CLINICAL PRACTICE'S ONLINE MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH (MPH) PROGRAM includes: a quality improvement advisor from Kansas with a passion for working in medically underserved areas; a clinical research nurse from Boston who wants to lead improvement projects in global health; and a palliative care physician and self-described "healthy" skeptic from Washington state who aims to improve the quality of care his organization provides.

The two-year program combines online learning with three short (one-week) residential periods each year on the Dartmouth campus in Hanover, NH. Like the residential program, the curriculum is designed to give students the skills and knowledge they need to effect change in health care, whether it's working on the front lines of care as providers or as policy analysts or researchers.

"We created the online MPH program to meet the needs of health professionals around the country who had expressed a desire to study at The Dartmouth Institute but who wanted or needed to keep working in their own communities while learning," said Dartmouth Institute Director Elliott Fisher, MD, MPH. "Not only will our new MPH program allow us to reach a new, much wider audience, but by helping students to rethink health and health care, we can help improve care across the country."

Students in the program take one content course at a time on subjects such as health care economics, co-producing health care, popula-

tion health foundations, and biostatistics. In addition to the online courses, students will complete a practicum which is similar to the capstone and internship project in the residential program. The practicums, which could be, for example, a delivery or quality improvement project in a hospital setting or a policy project, are designed to give students the opportunity to pursue their own interests in health care while working under the mentorship of a Dartmouth Institute faculty member. In order to build close-knit learning communities made up of professionals with diverse experiences in health care, students also will meet in smaller cohorts online each week to reflect on the class assignment.

"We are really proud of our innovative approach to teaching our adult learners. It allows us to reach health care leaders from around the country in a way that still feels personal and deeply connected, even if much of the conversation is online," said Tim Lahey, MD, MMSc, The Dartmouth Institute's director of education.

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For Jonathan Smith, who works for the Kansas Healthcare Collaborative as quality improvement advisor, the innovative approach to learning was part of the reason he chose to complete his MPH at The Dartmouth Institute. "They're really doing something different here; it's not your typical institution. You ask questions that people are afraid to ask, and then they're equipping us with the tools to do something about it," he said.

During the first residential week, held in Hanover on Aug. 8-13, Smith and his fellow classmates got a chance to begin building a closely knit learning community by participating in discussions led by some of The Dartmouth Institute's most renowned faculty. Sessions included decision analysis (led by Anna Tosteson), shared decision making (led by Glyn Elwyn), appraising health care information (led by Lisa Schwartz and Steven Woloshin), quality improvement (led by Paul Batalden), and several sessions on leading change in health care (led by Elliott Fisher, Nan Cochran, Tim Lahey, and Chris Trimble), among others.

The opportunity to focus on health care innovation with The Dartmouth Institute's faculty was what attracted Philadelphia Janelle Robinson to the program. "I found that a lot of other programs took a more general approach to public health. I already knew what I wanted to focus on and I wanted a program that would teach me what I need to know about effecting change," said Robinson, a research associate at the American College of Radiology. "I like that Dartmouth has a lot of experts in the field, and that it gives me the opportunity to learn from them and their experiences, and not just from the textbook."

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