

Pandemic offers real-time case study for students

April 20 2020, by Jennifer Parraga



During the COVID-19 pandemic, Master of Public Health students have turned their classwork to deep analysis on the actions taken by various countries and evaluation of their consequences based on epidemiological data. Credit: World Health Organization

Each day, Yun (Cherry) Lee watches as the COVID-19 pandemic

unfolds. As one of Schulich Medicine & Dentistry's 63 Master of Public Health students, she is paying close attention to how the country is managing the crisis.

With classes online, Lee and the entire class have settled into their curriculum while expanding their focus to the pandemic and honing their public-health skills.

"As future public-health professionals, we've been discussing what we can do to contribute to the current situation to flatten the curve, and also to plan for the future," Lee said.

Their discussions have led the class to do some deep analysis on the actions taken by various countries in response to the pandemic and evaluate the consequences based on epidemiological data. They have also been looking at the short- and long-term impacts of COVID-19 on a range of health and [social issues](#), such as [mental health](#) and addiction, housing, homelessness, chronic diseases, [emergency preparedness](#) and prioritization of health care services and tele-health care services.

Valuing the importance of communication during a pandemic, Lee says that several of her peers have been working on developing and translating infographics into different languages to ensure everyone has access to information.

Meanwhile, Lee's learning team shifted its project work to the pandemic and is developing a guidance document that will aim to detail processes to navigate a public health emergency of international concern.

"Through all of our discussions, I've been able to learn from my classmates, many of whom have experience working in emergency response and preparedness during SARS and MERS, which is invaluable," Lee said.

Lee has also learned a great deal by been watching and listening to the daily briefings presented by public health leaders.

"Their leadership is inspirational, steady and calm. They have exhibited grace under pressure, leading with facts and transparency while helping to navigate through this situation."

As she looks ahead to her own career, Lee hopes she will be able to model the confident leadership and effective communication she has been witnessing every day.

While tough to be watching from the sidelines, and even tougher on some days to adjust to deal with the stress and changes brought about by the [pandemic](#), Lee, who is an international student from Taiwan, says that it has been particularly stressful. She's grateful to the program and her classmates for their support which has enabled her to stay focused on learning.

"I'm constantly reflecting on what's being done, so that I can bring those things with me into my future practice."

Provided by University of Western Ontario

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