

**Graduate-Level Syndromic Surveillance Course,  
An International Society for Disease Surveillance Project  
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**Objective:** The paper describes the development of a graduate-level course to teach future non-medical public health workers about syndromic surveillance.

**Background:** Following the development of an introductory Continuing Education (CME) course in syndromic surveillance, the Education and Training Committee of the International Society for Disease Surveillance recognized the need to educate future non-medical public health workers and reviewed courses offered by the top five public health schools recognized by US News and World Report<sup>1</sup>. All public health schools offered courses that included information on public health practice and infectious disease epidemiology and few offered courses on spatial and disaster epidemiology with attention given to syndromic surveillance, but none of the schools offered a comprehensive course that integrated topics of public health practice, infectious disease surveillance, data management and analytic techniques, disaster preparedness, and syndromic surveillance<sup>2-6</sup>. The development of the graduate school course builds on our existing CME slide set goals that teaches students about syndromic surveillance and presents the course in a free and easy to use format for all schools of public health. The ISDS hopes the semester long course will be taught by ISDS members in each state to spread awareness and knowledge on the topic of syndromic surveillance. **Methods:** A list of lecture topics was created and reviewed by the Education and Training Committee in the spring of 2008. A thorough literature review will provide information on each lecture topic and be incorporated into a Microsoft PowerPoint® slide set by fall 2008. At the same time, ISDS is seeking a partnership with the American Public Health Association to develop this curriculum with U.S. schools of public health. Through this relationship, we hope to survey public health schools on useful information to include in the course. After reviewing types of courses offered at major US public health schools, the survey will be developed and reviewed by the Education and Training Committee. We hope to have surveys distributed through Survey Monkey® to most U.S. and Canadian public health schools by January 2009 and have responses compiled by February 2009. Our timeline is to have all survey information

incorporated into the course by summer 2009. After thorough review from the Education and Training committee and ISDS board members, the course should be freely available for download from the society's website in addition to the basic continuing education curriculum. **Results:** Lecture topics include an introduction to syndromic surveillance, information on syndromic data types and systems, descriptions of aberration detection methods, and how to adequately follow-up on aberrations. The course also provides lessons on traditional infectious disease and environmental surveillance methods, current surveillance practices by local and federal government involved in public health practice, public health preparedness, different data transfer, cleaning, and archiving processes, different analytic techniques, as well as information on how to conduct an acute disease investigation. We have sent out a letter to the American Public Health Association Education Committee and hope to move forward in surveying the schools of public health through the joint initiative. **Discussion:** The graduate level course is an attempt to educate future public health workers and non-medical members of the public health community on epidemiology methods regarding acute disease surveillance and specifically how these methods can be applied to syndromic surveillance. Our hope is that the course will be offered by all schools of public health and will advance the field of syndromic surveillance through education of our future public health workforce.

**References**

1. <http://grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/grad/pub/search>.
2. <http://commprojects.jhsph.edu/courses/Results.cfm>
3. [http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/registrar/courses/e\\_pi.shtml](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/registrar/courses/e_pi.shtml).
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5. <http://www.washington.edu/students/crscat/epidem.html>.
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