

THAT'S SICK!

HEADLINES FROM THE PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY BENCH



**Promotional
Toolkit**

www.thatssick.org

What Is “That’s Sick” All About?

In October 2014, the first Ebola case in the U.S. walked into a hospital in Dallas, Texas. Two nurses were infected while providing treatment. What if this happened to *your* community? Who do you rely on to confirm a biohazard threat is present and real?

A critical component to dealing with a public health emergency is the public health laboratory. PHLs provide necessary laboratory testing to support communicable disease outbreak investigations, monitor for biological and chemical threats, and serve as reference laboratories to provide testing for infrequently encountered diseases or toxic compounds.

Unfortunately, PHLs may soon face scientific staffing shortages. **It is a goal of the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) to educate the public about the work of PHLs and develop recruiting tools that will help generate interest in careers in laboratory science.** High school and early college students that are considering science-based careers or are majoring in science often have little or no idea what a PHL does (or that they even exist!).

This toolkit is intended to provide information to these students about PHLs through an interactive, web-based virtual open house called www.thatssick.org. The website hosts several case-based modules that explore different areas of science: environmental health, newborn screening, infectious disease, foodborne disease, vectorborne disease, and emergency preparedness, as well links to educational and career information.

This toolkit contains the following resources:

1. Graphics to share on social media
2. Sample social media content about That’s Sick
3. A downloadable flyer
4. A sample newsletter piece or blog post
5. FAQs about careers in public health laboratories
6. A list of resources to consult for more information
6. Other ways to spread the word about careers in PHLs

Please use these resources to inform students you work with about career possibilities in public health laboratory science!

Graphics to Share on Social Media

The images below are available for download at www.thatssick.org/toolkit.



Sample Social Media Content

If your school, organization or department has a presence on social media, consider sharing content about That's Sick that way!

Considering a career in #publichealth?
Visit www.thatssick.org to learn more about public health! labs.



What do tick bites, newborn babies, biohazard signs and lab goggles have in common? Visit www.thatssick.org to find out.

Love science but not sure what to be when you grow up? thatssick.org has the answer.
#publichealth

Lab coats are so hot right now. Why?
thatssick.org will tell you!



Are you a do-gooder/sciencey type? A career in a public health lab could be perfect for you. MORE at www.thatssick.org.



Stop by thatssick.org to figure out if you've got the chops to keep America healthy, one petri dish at a time.

Do you know what PHL stands for? HINT: It doesn't mean perfectly happy laughing or peachy hot lunch.
www.thatssick.org has the scoop.

Promotional Flyer

The flyer below is available for download at www.thatssick.org/toolkit.



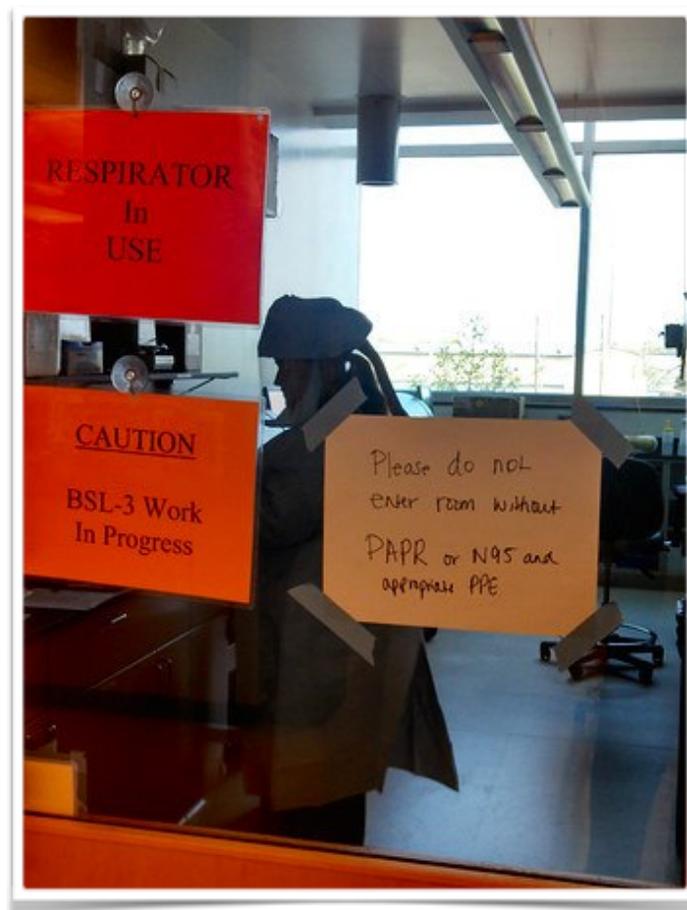
Sample Blog Post or Newsletter Article

Does your academic department maintain a blog? Does your career center on campus send out regular email updates? If so, consider using this ready-made article in one or both of those publications. We have permission from the author for this piece to be reused for the purposes of getting the word out about careers in public health and That's Sick. We've also included a photo you may use along with the article text (you can also download this image at thatssick.org/toolkit).

“Testing for MERS-CoV: The Indiana Lab’s Story”

Originally published on APHL’s Lab Blog (<http://www.aphlblog.org/>)

Link: <http://www.aphlblog.org/2014/05/testing-for-mers-cov-the-indiana-labs-story/>



Public Health Lab FAQs

Many folks don't know about what a fabulous career in public health labs can provide. See below for some answers to frequently asked questions on the topic...

Q: What should I major in if I want to work in a public health lab?

A: A degree in a science field will best prepare you for a career in a public health lab. You might consider a major in biology, microbiology, molecular biology, biochemistry, chemistry, environmental health, or public health.

Q: Isn't public health lab science the same thing as healthcare?

A: While there may be some similarities, public health lab science is much broader than clinical lab science that is performed in a healthcare setting. Public health is focused on keeping the general *population* free from harm, which includes infectious diseases, chemical exposures, chronic diseases, etc. Healthcare focuses on an *individual's* health. A public health laboratory scientist might perform testing that helps identify an infectious or chronic disease in a person - just like a clinical laboratory scientist. Some of the test methods may even be the same in both public health and healthcare. However, a public health lab scientist might also test water to make sure the public has clean water for recreation and to drink, food to make sure what the public eats won't make them sick, or mosquitoes and birds for certain viruses (such as West Nile virus) so that people know when there is a high risk for disease from mosquito bites - these are just a few areas that rely on public health lab science!

Public health laboratories work directly with public health programs to help identify potential sources of disease so that the source can be contained or eliminated. The laboratory information helps public health programs take actions to prevent harm to the community.

Check out www.thatssick.org for even more information!

Q: Can work in a public health lab put my health at risk?

A: The level of health risk varies depending on the type of work you perform. For instance, working with highly infectious materials may pose more of a risk than testing water samples for bacteria. There is always a risk when working in a laboratory; however, the risk is minimized by extensive safety training, utilization of appropriate safety equipment, and vaccinations (where applicable).

Q: What are the typical hours that a public health lab scientist usually works?

A: In general, a public health lab scientist works a standard schedule (full-time hours, Monday - Friday). However, if you are part of a special unit that responds to emergencies, or if you work in a laboratory that has weekend hours (more common in local public health labs), you may be asked to be available for extended hours or work a flexible schedule.

FAQs continued on next page...

FAQs, continued

Q: How much money do public health lab scientists usually make?

A: Per a salary survey conducted by APHL in 2010 (http://www.aphl.org/MRC/Documents/COM_2012Aug_Compensation-Analysis-Report.pdf), entry-level public health laboratory scientists typically made around \$40,000 per year, with the salary increasing depending on experience. However, depending on the cost-of-living where you live, the salary range could be more or less.

Q: What are the major areas/units of a public health lab?

A: Public health labs include surveillance, monitoring and testing samples for infectious, vectorborne and foodborne diseases; surveillance, monitoring and testing environmental samples (water and air quality monitoring); emergency preparedness/biodefense (response to biological and chemical terrorism); and newborn screening (testing babies for treatable diseases at birth). Some also serve as diagnostic and reference labs; include proficiency testing and quality assurance programs; research and development programs; and extramural research programs.

Q: What laboratory methods do public health labs use?

A: To name only a few, public health labs utilize classic microbiological (serology, antibiotic resistance/susceptibility testing); molecular (traditional or next generation sequencing-based genotyping); and environmental (chromatography, spectrometry) techniques.

Q: What types of employment do public health labs offer?

A: Laboratory aides, technicians and scientists, laboratory managers and directors, quality assurance officers, safety officers, information technology staff, training coordinators, case managers, and administrative and secretarial staff. Many labs also host student internships and pre- and post-doctoral fellows.

Q: Who can I talk to learn more about a career at a public health laboratory?

A: Public health laboratory scientists are your best resource when researching careers at a public health laboratory. Reach out to your local or state public health laboratory! Or attend a local STEM event or scientific meeting that has a session on laboratory careers. If you are ready to leap into a career in public health laboratory science then visit your local or state government's human resources website to find out how to search for careers. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention may have fellowship or career opportunities available (www.cdc.gov; www.usajobs.gov). And visit the APHL website to find out about some additional career and professional development opportunities: <http://www.aphl.org/mycareer/Pages/default.aspx>.

Resources

We've compiled a list of some fabulous resources on careers in PHLs here:

- Virtual Open House
www.Thatssick.org
- APHL Blog (Lablog)
<http://www.aphlblog.org>
- APHL Lab Matters Publication
<http://www.aphl.org/AboutAPHL/publications/lab-matters/pages/default.aspx>
- What is a Public Health Laboratory?
<https://vimeo.com/52548635>
- About Public Health Laboratories PDF
http://www.aphl.org/AboutAPHL/APHL_About-Public-Health-Laboratories.pdf

Other Ways to Spread the Word

These resources are designed to help you facilitate conversations with students who you think will be interested in a career in a public health lab. There are many ways to use them and motivate students to consider PHLs as their future offices. A few other ideas you may consider:

1. Invite a group of students who graduated in past years back to your class to speak about their career choices. Make sure a public health lab scientist is included.
2. Partner with the career center on your campus to further get the word out about That's Sick using the resources in this kit.
3. Devote the last 10 minutes of class one day to discuss thatssick.org. Share your own personal path to public health science with the group.
4. Post information about That's Sick on your faculty, alumni, community or other related email list.
5. Ask a student out for coffee to discuss That's Sick.

Contact Us

If you have additional questions regarding careers in public health labs or That's Sick, contact us by e-mailing contact@thatssick.org.