Change Management for Public Health Webinar

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A student perspective on the webinar

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I was fortunate enough to participate in the 'Change Management for Public Health Webinar' held remotely via Zoom on September 14th, 2021, at 12pm. We had two presenters, Dr. Steve Hawks, professor at Utah State University, and Isa Perry a Health Strategy Manager from the Davis County Health Department. Dr. Hawkes reviewed two change models by Kurt Lewin and John Kotter. Lewin's change management model had three steps whereas John Kotter's had eight steps. These two models had concepts that overlapped or were similar in the sense that both required a strategy, a moment where change was enacted, and a way to keep new performances permanent. After reviewing those two models, we were able to listen to a case study in change management that was experienced by one of our local health departments.

Isa Perry, a Health Strategy Manager, from the Davis County Health Department was able to review some of the changes that occurred in their organization. Mrs. Perry demonstrated a chart with numbers on one column that indicated the number of employees, the phone calls received, diseases reported, and the vaccines delivered. In the second column she demonstrated how all numbers nearly doubled or more for each category. This cemented the idea that between 2019 and 2020 tons of change occurred. We broke out into rooms to discuss what we hypothesized might be some of the things an organization might do well to react to the change and what an individual might do well to adapt to this increase in change. In my group we were able to determine one key issue which was that an organization that can re-allocate labor to cover a new task or duty quickly would be essential to handle the change. Other groups cited how public health individuals would have to perform skills "outside the box." There was also a need to have frequent and consistent communication from the organizations and people experiencing the change. Mrs. Perry explained how the public health department was accustomed to a continuous improvement model that helped them react to the pandemic quickly and efficiently. She described a customary practice at her organization known as 'Plan-Do-Study-Act Cyle'.

There were a few things that impacted me in this webinar. It was mentioned that as graduates we might need to look at an organization that is poised to handle changes efficiently when considering where to be employed. I was impacted by hearing about the theoretical process of a change model and then listening to a health professional who had to implement these behaviors during a pandemic. That was extremely interesting. I seemed like a daunting task, but they were able to create the changes required. The part that impacted me emotionally was that Mrs. Perry had mentioned that they worked with the idea that they MUST protect our most vulnerable which in turn protected the rest of the community. That was a significant statement for me because protecting those weaker in the community is something I am always trying to be mindful of. Overall, the webinar was highly informative and enjoyable. If you have time to listen to the recording, I highly recommend it since I am not able to cover everything that was discussed.