

Combined MD/MPH degree program looks ahead to 50th anniversary

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insidetulanemed@tulane.edu



A combined degree program offers Tulane medical students the option of a degree from the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. The dual degree program celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2021. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Tulane University's prestigious MD/MPH combined degree program will be celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2021, and the program has only grown in popularity and renown throughout the years.

The program is open to students who have been accepted to Tulane School of Medicine and wish to pursue both an MD from Tulane and an MPH from Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. More than 1,000 students have graduated from the program since its start in 1971.

When Tulane inaugurated the MD/MPH combined degree program, it was one of the first programs in the country to permit students to meet all requirements for both degrees during the four-year medical curriculum. Since then, the program has grown and stands as one of the largest in the country.

The first four joint degree students graduated in 1975. Today, graduating classes regularly exceed 30 students.

Joanna Locke, MD (M '03, PHTM '03), who owns consulting firm Locke Public Health, has benefited from holding both medical and public health degrees from Tulane. After completing an internship in psychiatry and a residency in preventive medicine and public health, Locke has worked for over 15 years in the nonprofit, education and health care sectors.

Locke said, "Health care will always be critically important, but so is preventing people from getting sick in the first place."

Physicians with public health training often pursue careers in academics, clinical research, clinical practice, international health, public policy, public health administration, health care administration and consultation, and practice management.

Tonette Krousel-Wood, MD (PHTM '91), associate dean for graduate medical education and associate provost for the health sciences, wrote in a message of the combined degree, "The program offerings through the Tulane Schools of Medicine and of Public Health and Tropical Medicine that integrate medical education and public health provide the foundation for better understanding of individual- and population-based health needs for improved health."