Preparing for a career in medical anthropology

Medical Anthropology is... the study of health and healing from an anthropological perspective.

Academic research in medical anthropology draws on different theoretical approaches, with a shared emphasis on increasing our understanding of the diverse ways in which cultural, social, and biological factors influence human experiences of pain, illness, suffering and healing in different settings.

In addition, medical anthropology investigates the social, political, and economic contexts in which health behavior and health systems are shaped.
Issues that medical anthropologists study

- cultural understandings of bodies and bodily processes;
- risk and protective dimensions of cultural norms and behaviors;
- illness experience and social meanings of disease;
- health effects of human ecologies and adaptive processes;
- and biosocial factors related to disease distribution and health disparities.
Careers might include…

• University Professor/Medical School Professor
• Health Education Professional
• Public Health Researcher
• Epidemiologist
• Medical Scientist/Physician
• Genetic Counselor
• Health Care Administrator
• Health Outreach Coordinator
• Health and Social Policy Analyst
• Health Care Consultant
• Health Sciences Librarian
• Social Worker/Patient Advocate
• Medical Interpreter
• Hospital Chaplain

How many of these careers include “medical anthropology” in the job title?
Steps towards a great job in medical anthropology

- **Self assessment:**
  - what do I want to do?
  - What skills/knowledge do I already have?

- **Career exploration:**
  - What’s “out there” in the world of medical anthropology jobs I might like?
  - what do others CALL what I want to do?

- **Identifying and closing the gaps**
  - Knowledge/Skills assessment: where am I now?
  - Knowledge/Skills assessment: where do I want to be?
  - What courses/majors should I ALSO pursue in order to prepare?
List some skills that would be useful for careers in med anth

- Medical terminology proficiency (f)
- Clinical skills (CPR, phlebotomy, etc) (t)
- Grant writing (t), bio-statistics (t)
- Program evaluation (k, f, t)
- Deep understanding of medical culture (k)
- Background in epidemiology/public health (k)
- Ethnographic research experience (f)
- Excellent oral/written communication (f)
- Foreign language proficiency (f)
My story...

- The role of the hospital chaplain
How can I find (or create) my dream job?

- Self Assessment (resource books, Career Services)
- Taking the Anth 1099 class seriously
- Researching careers (internet research, shadowing)
- Extra-curricular activities like field schools
- Attending professional meetings
- Getting a second major
- Doing an internship
- Volunteering
- Getting a “foot in the door” with entry level employment
Resources
More resources
Relevant professional orgs

- WAPA
- NAPA
- SfAA
- SMA
Some med anthro focused fieldschools

- Utah State University Ethnographic Field School
- Open Ethnography Program
- NAPA Field School
Grad schools to consider

- University of Memphis
- Northwestern University
- UCSF/UCB
- University of Washington
- University of Alabama
- Harvard University
- Case Western University
Building your portfolio...

- CV/Resumé
- Keeping a job-research notebook
- Internships and other extra-curricular activities
- Letters of recommendation
- Networking, networking, networking…