

# Students' Perceptions of Community Health Field Practices I

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## Abstract:

**Introduction:** Reflective analysis of the Primary Health Care (PHC) strategy and principles allows for a look back at the past, facilitating the identification of strengths and weaknesses, which is fundamental. Lafit et al. (2025).

**Objective:** To examine students' perceptions of field placements before and after the Community Health I course in Mar del Plata, 2025.

**Materials and methods:** This descriptive, non-experimental, longitudinal study was conducted with students in the Community Health I course of the Medicine program at a private university in Mar del Plata during the 2025 academic year. The sample consisted of 57 students, selected using non-probability convenience sampling.

**Results:** Regarding the expectations students expressed for their pre- and post-course field placements in Community Health I, 95% reported being able to plan and implement health promotion and prevention strategies, 88% reported identifying factors that influence health, and 84% reported learning about the problems in different areas of the city. However, they acknowledged the need for a deeper understanding of how other institutions collaborate with health centers.

**Conclusions:** The study of students' perceptions of the Community Health I course allowed for the identification of strengths and weaknesses in the data obtained through the pre- and post-test questionnaire. A strengthening of students' competencies during their initial training as health promotion and disease prevention agents was evident, although there are aspects that require further development.

**Keywords:** Community Health I, Medicine, Primary Health Care Percepción de estudiantes sobre las prácticas en terreno de Salud Comunitaria I.

## Introduction:

Lamus Lemus et al. (2015) conclude that increasing "community-based care" experiences is crucial for benefiting society from a social perspective. The community-based approach within medicine offers a wide range of possibilities for training (Silberman, 2021: p. 62). Reflective analysis of the Primary Health Care (PHC) strategy and principles allows for a look back at past experiences, facilitating the identification of strengths and weaknesses, which is fundamental (Lafit et al., 2025). In their article, Cruz Yamunaqué (2025) highlights the importance of training students in Primary Health Care, where topics related not only to medicine but also to values can be addressed. Community Health has been incorporated into numerous institutional curricula, as well as the implementation of networks that allow for the sharing of experiences associated with this type of action (Pasarín and Diez, 2013). Cotonieto-Martínez, Rodríguez-Terán (2021). They conduct an analysis of various aspects associated with Community Health, and within these, the strategies implemented for disease prevention are very extensive. Armas, García, and

Cofiño (2018) highlight the complexity of the community setting and how it has gained more prominence in different areas. The objective of this research was to examine students' perceptions of field practices before and after the Community Health I course in the Medicine program at Mar del Plata in 2025.

## Materials and methods

The research was conducted in a descriptive, non-experimental, longitudinal manner, within the Community Health I course of the Medicine program at a private university in the city of Mar del Plata, during the 2025 academic year. The sample consisted of 57 students, selected using non-probability convenience sampling.

## Results

As part of the 431/22 Resolution of the Faculty of Medicine, two axes are proposed, one of which is Community Health, established from first to fifth year.

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Figure 1: Scheduled activities in the Community Health course

Initial Analysis and Preparation	Immersion in the Primary Level of Care	Intervention and Collaboration Practice	Reflection and Closure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work teams are formed to address the different areas of community health.</li> <li>• The methodologies to be used in the program are introduced and discussed.</li> <li>• An in-depth reflection is carried out on the importance and impact of community health in the target population.</li> <li>• Factors affecting community health are analyzed, including socioeconomic, environmental, and behavioral aspects.</li> <li>• Each work group begins to create a portfolio to document their activities and findings.</li> </ul>	<p>A comprehensive assessment of the primary level of care is conducted, including its resources and limitations.</p> <p>Activities outside healthcare facilities are initiated, bringing students closer to the community.</p> <p>The most common health problems in the community are identified.</p> <p>Activities carried out at the primary care level are observed and analyzed.</p> <p>An agenda of prioritized health problems is organized. A space is created to integrate theoretical knowledge with practical experience. Supervised interventions are carried out in the community.</p>	<p>Self care counseling interventions and specific protection activities for the community are practiced.</p> <p>The same interventions are carried out, but under supervision.</p> <p>Contact is established with different institutions within the programmatic area.</p> <p>Key social actors in the Programmatic Area are identified. Health care interventions are practiced.</p> <p>Communication is established with different social actors. Health care actions are planned in collaboration with institutions in the Programmatic Area,</p>	<p>A feedback session and reflection on the actions carried out is conducted, from a biopsychosocial approach.</p> <p>Final portfolio feedback is conducted.</p> <p>Cases are analyzed and resolved using a biopsychosocial approach.</p> <p>The portfolio is presented and completed.</p>

Note. Prepared based on the course schedule using NAPKIN AI.

Classes in August and integrated practice spaces are carried out in the classroom. In September, field activities begin with attendance at the assigned Primary Health Care Center (CAPS), coordinated by teaching assistants.

The research is carried out in a descriptive, non-experimental, longitudinal manner in the Community Health 1 course of the Medicine Program at a Private University in Mar del Plata during the 2025 academic year.

The sample of 57 students was selected through non-probability convenience sampling. Age ranged from 18 to 41 years, with a mean of 19.4 years and a standard deviation of +3.6 years. Students were asked whether they had previously attended other programs: 77% indicated they had not, while 19% reported having studied medicine at another institution, 2% Physical Education (PE) and 2% Criminalistics.

Table 1. Characteristics that a person participating in an academic work group should have

	PRE	POST
Respect	100%	98%
Listening	96%	98%
Open-minded	96%	89%
Responsability	94%	98%
Proactivity	81%	82%
Flexibility	79%	75%
Humility	75%	74%

**Table 2.** Expectations reported by students regarding field practices before and after Community Health I.

	PRE	POST
Promotion/prevention planning	92%	95%
Health determinants	90%	88%
Local health problems	85%	84%
Theory-practice integration	79%	81%
Institutional articulation	42%	56%

It is noteworthy how students' perception of "planning and carrying out promotion and prevention strategies" improves after field practices to 95%. Regarding articulation with other health centers, although the percentage increased by 14%, it remains low, indicating that this aspect should continue to be strengthened.

**Table 3.** Areas most associated with Primary Health Care

	PRE	POST
Health promotion	94%	98%
Disease prevention	92%	96%
Community participation	77%	77%
Rehabilitation/palliative	2%	2%

Students strongly recognize promotion and prevention. Rehabilitation and palliative care show very low perception and do not change, reflecting the need to reinforce lifelong care approaches.

**Table 4.** Risk factors that may affect Primary Health Care

	PRE	POST
Inaccessibility	96%	89%
Unhealthy habits	92%	91%
Sedentary lifestyle	92%	91%
Environmental factors	92%	84%
Poor nutrition	92%	91%
Drinking water	92%	84%
Socioeconomic conditions	88%	89%
Biological factors only	8%	16%

Recognition of risk factors is highly relevant as it allows implementing prevention strategies.

**Table 5.** Agreement with statements related to Primary Health Care

	PRE	POST
Accessible, community-focused services with scientific rigor	94%	98%
Strategy protecting the right to health without exclusions	92%	96%
Model addressing social determinants	77%	77%
Basis of health system and socioeconomic development	2%	5%

A key aspect to improve is that only 5% post-course associate PHC with global social and economic development.

Students were asked how important PHC is for health system sustainability (scale 1-5) the results were:

**PRE: 4.75 / POST: 4.7**

#### Student Comments

- “This course is very useful and helps me understand the main role of the health team in different areas, based on prevention and promotion.”
- “I really like being in contact with the community.”
- “Very good course, integrating theory and practice.”
- “Great participation in CPAS and very engaging interventions.”
- “I really liked having our first real contact with communities as medical students.”

#### Conclusions

The study of students’ perceptions of Community Health 1 allowed identifying strengths and weaknesses based on pre and post-course data. A strengthening of competencies in health promotion and prevention was observed, although some aspects still need to be reinforced.

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