

Department of Health Services Research Postgraduate Programmes

Health Services Research (HSR) is a multidisciplinary scientific field that examines how people get access to health care services, how much care costs, and what happens to patients as a result of this care[1]. Studies in **HSR** investigate how social factors, financing systems, organizational structures and processes, medical technology, and personal behaviors affect access to health care, the quality and cost of health care, and quantity and quality of life. **HSR** is more concerned with delivery and access to care, in contrast to medical research, which focuses on the development and evaluation of clinical treatments.

Our approach to HSR includes research focusing on public policy analysis of health care and long-term care systems. This approach includes; access to the provision, relevance and appropriateness to the needs of individuals and communities, services utilization, quality of services, as well as how services are experienced by users, or the concerns regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of health care services and long-term care services.

The **Department of Health Services Research**, Faculty of Medicine, University of Tsukuba is the first created department independently focusing on this field in Japan. Our faculties are strongly committed to postgraduate work. Here at our HSR Department you will be working in a friendly, supportive, international environment. We are working hard for our postgraduate qualification to be respects and recognized everywhere.

Postgraduate Programmes

The programmes offered by **the Department of HSR**, University of Tsukuba have been set up in response to a perceived need in health care and long-term care sectors in

Japan for high quality research. Our Programmes provide a comprehensive training in the theory and practice of Health Services Research and gives students the experience and skills needed for research. Graduates go on to work in government departments, research units, universities, health care organizations, long-term care organizations and the health care private sector.

Using mainly a broad range of quantitative study methods, bringing together of social science perspectives with the biomedical sciences we aims to perform research that can be applied by physicians, nurses, other healthcare professionals, health managers and administrators, and other people who make policy, make decisions or deliver care in the health care system and long-term care system.

Our students come from a variety of specializations, including medicine, nursing, public health, economics, epidemiology, biostatistics, management, and psychology. Some arrive directly from university, while others come from government departments and agencies, public hospitals, long-term care facilities or academic field. The programme allow students to gain an accredited qualification whilst continuing in their careers, and offer the flexibility to spread study over a period of years to match professional and personal circumstances.

Research degrees

We offer two programmes with the aim of providing students with the skills and confidence to apply the principles of health services research within the workplace. Our Master's (MSc) and Doctoral(PhD) research degrees provide the opportunity to undertake a sustained, supervised research project, culminating in a thesis. We offer the following research options:

- Master's programmes cover the basic principles and tools of health services research. There are two Master's Programmes and their degrees are; Master of Human-Care Science and Master of Public Health.

- Doctoral programmes cover these same basic tools and deeper knowledge in specific areas. There are two Doctoral Programmes and their degrees are; Doctor of Philosophy in Human Care Science and Doctor of Philosophy.

Courses covering aspects of epidemiology, public health, biostatistics, social policy, health economics, quality of life, research design, international health and development and health are available.

Department of Health Services research

The Department of Health Services research is not very large in size, four academic staff involved in supervision, and researchers or professors from out of the department can support as well, many of whom are leading researchers in their area. In a friendly atmosphere and infrastructure that combines cutting-edge facilities with a philosophy of collaboration between staff, students, and associated researches we develop our daily activities. In addition to HSR staff, for potential students interested in health services research, Research Assistant (RA) placement and/or Teaching Assistant (TA) placement are eventually offers.

Graduate activities

Students will have the opportunity to attend the departmental seminars, the internal research students' progress meetings, and the study critic meetings (and will be required to conduct some of them as part of their course).

Regular attendance at Research Student Progress Meetings is part of the duties of research students at Tsukuba HSR Department. All students are therefore required to attend and to participate actively in the discussion. Quite apart from the help and encouragement that you can offer your classmates, these are extremely useful

opportunities to improve presentation skills, by learning from both what's good and what's bad in other students' presentations.

On the other hand, the HSR staff, actively encourages participation in national and international conferences and the publication of the results of the researches in international journal. Some financial assistance is available to students who publish or who are invited to present papers.

Admissions Requirements

To be eligible for admission to the HSR postgraduate Programmes, students must have a university degree. The subject of the first degree must be appropriate to the intended subject of research and should normally include courses in epidemiology and/or public health, basic statistics and minimum skill in data software analysis. Students who wish to enter directly into the PhD programme should normally have completed a Master's Programme or equivalent. Our former students qualifications included medicine, nursing, physiotherapy, economic, care management, social work and pharmacy. English language ability and SAS/ SPSS software skills are desirable.

Programme structure

Postgraduate work in Health Services Research Department is devoted essentially to research and the preparation of thesis. Students may register for a minimum period of two year for a Master degree or for three years for a Doctoral degree, assessed in each case by thesis after fulfilled successfully with corresponding academic credits. To obtain the PhD degree, the student should had been published an original article in a recognized scholarly journal.

Master's Programmes

The taught Master's Programme provides an adequate preparation for those starting research, or entering a career in health, welfare or social sciences. The Master Programme normally lasts for two years, full time. Coursework runs from April to March. The compulsory student courses totaling 30 credits. Students may be allowed to take one or more optional credits from courses regarding to career development, thesis writing, writing for journals, presentation to conferences, and so on.

During the first year, each student is assigned a supervisor, who helps them select a research issue and to prepare for their research thesis. The thesis research must contain an original contribution to knowledge or understanding. Appropriate research training is provided during the first year of the Programme. During this year, the student is required to attend most of the compulsory courses (core credits) and demonstrates skills in topics such as bibliographical research, the preparation of data, creation of conceptual models, descriptive data analysis and adequate presentation. Almost at the end of this year, the students should be able to design his/her research and to model the data using preferably linear regression or binary logistic regression models.

During the second year, the student will be focus to write his/her thesis with the support of the supervisor. He/she is also required to attend some advanced courses, and to present the thesis improvement in progress meetings to fellow students and staff. At this time, the focus will put in the presentation and interpretation of the results and discussion and conclusion of his/her research. A presentation to national conferences is recommends.

The Master programme concludes with the submission of a thesis, previous several public oral presentations which are examined by a committee of referees.

Doctoral Programmes

Students who already have a post-graduate qualification in medicine, public health nursing, economics ,social sciences or other biomedical specializations can be admitted to the 3 year PhD Programme. Coursework runs from April to March.

During the first year, each student is assigned a supervisor, who helps them select a research issue and to prepare for their research career. Appropriate research training is provided during the first year of the Programme. The students may be required to attend courses or seminars, in order to complete their background preparation in epidemiology, public health, biostatistics, economics, and as necessary to their research issue. A total of 12 credits are required in the PhD programme. During this year, the student is closely supervised by the 'research supervisor' and must to presents a satisfactory extended research project.

During the second year, the student will be focus to develop his/her research with the support of the supervisor. The research issue must address to an original contribution to knowledge or understanding of Health Services Research field. According to the research issue, conceptual model and data availability, the methodology option could to include linear regression models, logistic regression models, Cox's regression model, survival analysis, micro-simulation model, Markov model, economic evaluation methods or others validated quantitative methods.

During this year, the student is required to attend to the compulsory seminars (core credits), if already are not completed and demonstrates skills in topics such as bibliographical research, the preparation of data, creation of conceptual models, data analysis and adequate presentation. In the first two terms, he/she is also required to present their research improvement in the Progress Meetings activity to fellow students and staff and participate actively in Study Critic activity. At the end of this year, it is

desirable that the students be able to submit an original article to a scholarly Journal. A presentation to national conference is recommends.

During the third year the student concentrates to write his/her thesis. As Masters, PhD programme concludes with the submission of a thesis, previous several public oral presentations which are examined by a committee of referees. To submit the thesis, publish or at least acceptance as an original article in academic journals listed in our guidance is definitely required. He/she is also required to attend some advanced courses, and to chair Study Critic or Progress Meetings face to fellow students and staff.

Elaborated by: Pedro OLIVARES-TIRADO modified by Tamiya
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Reference:

1 Sheikh K, et al. **Building the Field of Health Policy and Systems Research: Framing the Questions.** *PLoS Med*, 8(8): e1001073. Published August 16, 2011.