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### APHA Experience

Public health has a responsibility to take action to ameliorate disparities affecting the health of those with disabilities. This year's American Public Health Association (APHA) conference focused on social justice. The APHA disability section did an excellent job evaluating the social justice of how those with disabilities are included or not included in health promotion programs, policies, research, social participation, health care services, etc.

I am a graduate student at Oregon State University pursuing an MPH in epidemiology and a PhD in Nutrition Exercise Science focusing on *Movement Studies in Disability*. I was given the opportunity to attend the APHA conference from the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) in collaboration with the APHA Disability Section.

Attending the Disability section sessions was an eye opening experience. Some topics of interest included: health promotion programs for people with disabilities, disability policy, measurement issues in disability research, and unmet healthcare needs among people with disabilities.

The most valuable APHA experience was the Disability Section mentoring session with Gloria Krahn, PhD, George Jesien, PhD, Jana Peterson, MPH PhD, and Willi Horner-Johnson, PhD. It was a pleasure to meet these prominent and successful professionals in the field. In addition to the meet and greet, the mentors gave valuable advice ranging from managing a career and personal life to successful publication and grant writing.

It was only after the first day of the conference that I knew I found my niche in the professional world. I thought to myself, these are the professionals I want to interact with, learn from, and collaborate with in my career. I was able to see firsthand how I could become a better change agent for people with disabilities, and that was exciting.

Overall, the APHA conference was well beyond what I expected. I was so pleased with the knowledge I gained, that I will be back to APHA next year in Washington, DC. I will hopefully contribute my research and knowledge in a disability section session.