UCSF School of Medicine has introduced a new, innovative curriculum to prepare medical students for their future roles, and the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics plays a key role in that curriculum.

The new Bridges curriculum, introduced a year ago, immerses students in clinical teams early in their education and emphasizes inquiry, asking questions that push understanding of human health and disease. It also provides dedicated time for students to work on scholarly research projects.

?We set out with this new curriculum to ensure that every medical student develops an understanding not only of the solid building blocks of biomedical science as they are known today, but also the cutting-edge science occurring today that will lead to advances in the way they care for patients tomorrow,? said Catherine Lucey, MD, executive vice dean of the School of Medicine, in an interview in 2016 when the program launched.

An underlying concept of the curriculum is that medical knowledge is constantly changing, and that UCSF graduates should be ready to become tomorrow?S leaders in answering the
unknown answers and unsolved problems. Hence the introduction of research projects and the importance of epidemiology, biostatistics and population sciences (EBPS) to the curriculum.

?Many of the students? research projects are epidemiology-based,? said Lydia Zablotska, MC, PhD, professor of epidemiology and biostatistics.

Zablotska serves as the epidemiology, biostatistics and population science ?topic steward? for the curriculum, making sure these disciplines are incorporated into all four years of medical school education in order to provide students an integrated, developmentally appropriate educational experience.

Previously, students had epidemiology and evidence-based medicine sessions during three medical courses. In the new curriculum, epidemiology, biostatistics and population sciences are required elements integrated into Inquiry curriculum of the Foundational Sciences[1] curriculum in the first 18 months of the program. Through lectures and small groups in year one, department faculty introduce medical students to study design, biostatistics and epidemiologic methods to enable them to read studies and understand the methods of published studies and to be prepared to design their own studies when they enter the next stage of their education.

In year two, faculty provide more in-depth education on epidemiologic research methods, data analysis such as regression analysis and bias and confounding, and other study design issues. Students put what they learn into practice in years two, three and four through mentored research projects on topics of their choice as part of the Inquiry curriculum[2]. During this period, Zablotska and the department provide just-in-time EBPS materials as needed.

Zablotska also recruits department faculty to participate in the program either as lecturers or small group leaders. ?These opportunities require much less time than teaching a course for a semester,? she said. ?But they are important roles in the formation of future medical professionals.?

Visit these links to learn more information about the Bridges curriculum:

Bridges curriculum
future