

Epidemiological Concepts, Principles, and Methods: A Practice-oriented Introduction

Facilitators

Prof. GUSEVA CANU Irina

University of Lausanne, Unisanté, Department of Occupational and Environmental Health

Prof. ROHRMANN Sabine

University of Zürich, Division of Chronic Disease Epidemiology

Prof. GAYET-AGERON Angèle

University of Bern, Institute for Social and Preventive Medicine (ISPM)

Description

Epidemiology is the branch of medical sciences that investigates the distribution of health-related states and events in specified populations (community, institutions [schools], city, state, country, region, continent, worldwide). Epidemiology also includes the assessment of any intervention applied to remediate a health problem.

In this introductory course, we will treat the following topics:

1. Definition, objectives and objects of modern epidemiology (i.e., types of outcomes and their determinants/exposures).
2. Validity and precision of exposure and outcome.
3. Study designs and association measures.
4. Causal framework and the role of chance and bias in epi-studies.
5. Principles of good study design and protocol drafting.

Different concepts will be introduced using contemporary examples from exposure-oriented (nutritional, occupational and environmental epidemiology) and outcome-oriented epidemiology (i.e., communicable and non-communicable diseases and clinical epidemiology).

To assimilate these notions, students will be stimulated to precise/redefine their original research question and hypotheses considering the study design appropriate in their chosen context.

Objectives

This course has a double goal: 1-to enable students to use appropriate methods and data to understand and deal with health-related problems, 2-to prepare students for the conduct of epidemiological research. At the end of this course the students will be able:

1. to formulate the problem and specify hypotheses to be addressed or clear research question
2. to elaborate a structured research protocol to address the research question using an appropriate study design, accurate (valid and precise) measurements of the exposure and the targeted health outcomes
3. to anticipate the risk of potential biases (selection, misclassification, confounding) and to propose strategies to control them
4. to interpret study results in the frame of causality
5. to identify the appropriate guidelines and apply them when conducting an epidemiological study and reporting its results.

Key Benefits:

- ✓ Opportunity to acquire essential principles of epidemiology quickly.
- ✓ Familiarize yourself with practical applications in the field.
- ✓ Bring your concrete questions from your research or studies and get them answered.
- ✓ Personalized advice for project proposal writing and grant submission

Dates

27 April - 1 May 2026

Eligibility

SSPH+ IGC students with interest in public health and epidemiology.
Maximum 25 students

Course Structure

Pedagogical format will mix theoretical teaching with practical exercises using published research findings. Different contemporary public health problems (e.g., SARS-CoV-2 seroprevalence, obesity and metabolic and mental disorders, nutritional, occupational and environmental

epidemiology) will be analyzed in interaction with students, who will apply a deductive reasoning to formulate possible underlying hypotheses that they could then translate into research questions.

Assessment

At the end of the first 4 days, the students will draft a basic study protocol to answer their research questions on exposure/ intervention or a health problem of their interest. Those students who are already involved in an epidemiological study could present and critically assess the protocol of their studies. Depending on the number of students, they could work in small groups of 4-5 students. On day 5, each protocol will be presented to their peers and discussed collectively.

Credits

2 ECTS

Preliminary Work: 3-5 h; Contact time: 40 h; Wrap-Up Work: 7-10 h

(1 ECTS corresponds to appr. 25-30 hours workload)

Location

Unisanté, Lausanne, room tbd

Course Fees

	2 ECTS
SSPH+ IGC PhD and MD Students	30 CHF
Postdocs from SSPH+ partner institutes with a SSPH+ Faculty Member as line manager	30 CHF
External PhD students, external MD Students, postdocs from SSPH+ partner institutes without a SSPH+ Faculty Member as line manager and Swiss Public Health Doctors in training	600 CHF
Others	1'600 CHF

Registration

<https://www.conftool.com/ssph-phd-courses2026/>

Deadline for registration

27 March 2026

in collaboration with