



Hebrew University-Hadassah Braun School of Public Health & Community Medicine International MPH Alumni Newsletter

August 2018



Israel's Agency for International
Development Cooperation
Ministry of Foreign Affairs



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Greetings from Prof. Ora Paltiel, Braun School Director

Dear Alumni,

Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever. *Ecclesiastes*

This year again we find ourselves in mourning for one of our beloved teachers. Yet their legacy is the tools that they gave us to actually improve and repair the world, to improve the health of our populations and those of our neighbors and to transmit the tools we learned to others. Nothing is more gratifying for us at the Braun School than to see our graduates continue their commitment to making the world a safer place for its inhabitants. Therefore, knowing about your successes, efforts, and even failures, will let us know that you are trying, that you are making an effort to make a change.

Public health requires an ability to adapt to and acquired new knowledge, and to keep pace with changing evidence and changing environmental circumstances. We are committed to lifelong learning among our alumni, and this is embodied by our alumni meetings, seed grants, mentorship programs, and this year two exciting opportunities to come back and learn in Jerusalem – about tuberculosis, or about applied logistic regression.

Striving for excellence was the mantra of Prof. Jeremy Kark, beloved teacher and former director of the IMPH program. Jeremy was my teacher and my colleague.

Finally, if you feel you are able, we would appreciate your contribution to the **JOE ABRAMSON MEMORIAL FUND** which will enable worthy candidates to study in our School.

Sincerely,

Ora Paltiel



The **JOE ABRAMSON MEMORIAL FUND**, established at the School on the occasion of the first anniversary of Prof's passing, offers you, dear Alumni, the opportunity to join Pears Foundation, MASHAV, the British Friends of The Hebrew University and our other generous and dedicated IMPH scholarship sponsors to contribute to the training of future generations of public health professionals and allow others to experience the IMPH EXPERIENCE!

Donations to the **JOE ABRAMSON MEMORIAL FUND** are earmarked for scholarships for International and Israeli Braun School students (according to your preference), travel awards for students and young researchers to participate in international conferences, and the organization of professional and academic alumni activities.

We would love to see this initiative bring all our IMPH Alumni together around this important cause. At the same time, we understand that philanthropy is very personal and reflects individual preferences, personal financial situation, degree of connection to the cause, etc. Some may wish to make larger contributions and some not be interested in giving or may not be in a position to contribute at all at this time. We respect everyone and their decision. We will be happy to receive even modest donations, however, if now is not a good time, perhaps down the road – the **JOE ABRAMSON MEMORIAL FUND** is an open fund that will utilize the donated money as it becomes available for the purposes stated above.

Thank you for considering this request.

Warmest regards and Good Cheer!
Yehuda

Speaking of 'nourishing mother", I draw your attention to the insightful editorial "US Opposition to Breastfeeding Endangers Public Health" written by IMPH Alumnus Dr. Andrew Bucu. We invite all of you to weigh in on this important public health issue, and any other you feel strongly about.



Prof. Yehuda Neumark with Dr. Catalina Lopez-Quintero

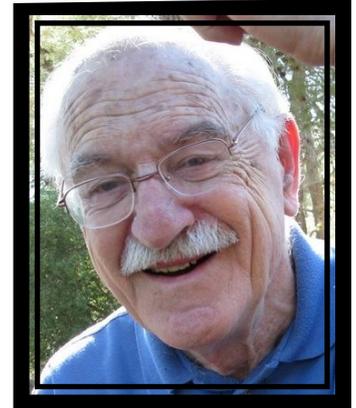
JOE ABRAMSON MEMORIAL FUND

Funds can be transferred in one of the following ways:

Online payment by credit card

You can complete the [online donation form](#) and from the pull-down "I would like to support" menu select: Public Health – Prof. Joe Abramson Scholarships

Please notify Ms. Neva Treistman at nevat@savion.huji.ac.il of your donation



The online form for donations from within Israel can be found [here](#)

Payment by check

Checks should be made out to "The Hebrew University of Jerusalem" and mailed to:

Ms. Neva Treistman

Braun School of Public Health and Community Medicine

Faculty of Medicine

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Ein Kerem Campus

Jerusalem 91120 Israel

Payment by bank transfer

Name of Bank: Bank Hapoalim,

Jerusalem Business Branch, No. 436

Address: 1 Hamarpeh Street, Har Hozvim, Jerusalem 97774, Israel

Name of Account Holder: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Account No.: 12-436-506076

Swift No.: POALILIT

IBAN: IL65-0124-3600-0000-0506-076

Please send bank transfer reference to Neva Treistman at nevat@savion.huji.ac.il

The Hebrew University has a 501(c)3 status in the US.

Thank you.

Message from Dr. Maureen Malowany, IMPH Alumni Academic Coordinator

Dear Alumni,

The academic year is coming to a close as our students work on their Masters' papers or theses but alumni activities carry on! We welcome alumni (Joseph Akuamoah, Ghana; Moses Djimatey Barima, Ghana; Angela Benson, Liberia; Ulo Benson, Kenya; Lucas Esuh Esong, Cameroon; Mohamed Boie Jalloh, Sierra Leone; Evelyn Kimani, Kenya; Andrew Method, Tanzania and Emmanuel Ogum, Nigeria) in the last week of August for a TB workshop organised by Dr. Daniel Chemtob at the Ministry of Health, Jerusalem as a foundation course for a WHO- TB consultancy training program. We have a number of Pears Seed Grant applications in stages of the review process. We have begun to plan for a Pears-sponsored IMPH Alumni West Africa Regional meeting to be held in Ghana, last week of February 2019.



You heard from us a year ago with regard to submitting a project proposal in answer to a call from ELRHA for Public Health evaluations of interventions in humanitarian conflict, crisis and recovery settings. We had planned to resubmit for the 2018 call but the focus/theme for this year is Health Systems Strengthening and we have had to say 'no' to that call. Last year's experience – contacting all of you, getting updates on your work/employment – only underlined the difficulties of communicating by email. You could be in the field with limited or no internet access or in more formal settings with the same difficulties. We need more timely access and information from you all. To that end, we have set up regional WhatsApp groups so there is a one-step process for sharing information. Reut will compile the information that is of cross-regional interest and importance and send these messages out to everyone in the groups. If you haven't yet joined, please do. If you're not sure who to contact, email me or Reut and we will connect you with your group. As you all know, funding opportunities can appear at any time, often with very short windows and we want to support your career development in any way we can. Keep us in your career loop!!

We are very excited to welcome Dr. Norbert Rakiro home for this year's graduation as our Keynote Speaker! More on graduation 2018 in the next newsletter.

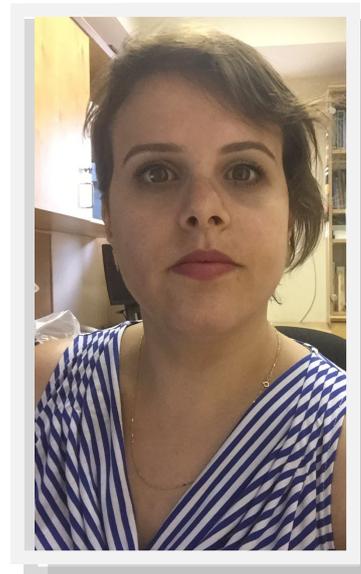
Warm regards,

Maureen

Message from Ms. Reut Kramer—
IMPH Alumni Communications Coordinator

Dear Alumni,

We are now approaching the end of the 2017-2018 academic year. All of our students are hard at work studying for exams and writing their final theses and papers. Soon they will graduate and join our great global Alumni Family! Most of you probably remember graduation - how exciting the ceremony was, how you felt coming back home and seeing all your family and friends after an entire year being in Jerusalem. I am sure you can recall your first steps back into your post-graduation career. We all know that it can be quite a challenge! To help smooth the transition, we have already added the graduating students to the Alumni Social platform. They might approach you asking for advice or help in their search for a job. Please take the time to help them make the transition from trainee to employee as stress-free and fruitful as possible!



We are always looking for ways to make our communication with our Alumni more affective and accessible. We established WhatsApp regional groups for West Africa and East Africa, following the Alumni conferences in Nigeria (2017) and Tanzania (March 2018), and recently opened groups for India and Nepal and for North America Alumni. More groups will be opened soon. All these groups are administrated by the IMPH team and one or two of our Alumni, who do their utmost to keep the communication spam-free. We realize that not all Alumni are interested in joining groups, so we also suggest being on our WhatsApp “mailing list” to receive our selected broadcasted messages. If you are interested in joining our WhatsApp community, please send me your number to Reutkra@savion.huji.ac.il (and specify if you wish to join a group, mailing list or both).

All our updates and news will continue to be sent through emails, the Alumni Social Platform, Facebook, etc.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Andrew Bucu for his great contribution to this newsletter. We would love to see more Alumni sharing their knowledge and opinions on public health issues!

Wishing us all a pleasant summer,

Reut

Editorial: Dr. Rene Andrew Bucu (Philippines | IMPH 2014)

US Opposition to Breastfeeding Endangers Public Health

Health officials at the recent World Health Assembly (WHA) were stunned when the United States tried unsuccessfully to undermine a resolution to protect and promote breastfeeding. [The New York Times](#) revealed how an Ecuador-sponsored resolution seeking to help countries strengthen breastfeeding practices and restrict misleading marketing of breastmilk substitutes, expecting unanimous approval, was challenged by the United States, openly refuting decades' worth of evidence and research on infant and young child feeding.

In a move reminiscent of pressure from tobacco and sugar industries, US delegates sought to water down legislation that would empower countries to support mothers to breastfeed and to restrict the promotion of food products inappropriate for young children. When this failed, the American contingent resorted to threats of economic sanctions and withdrawal of military aid. In the face of intimidation from one of the world's most powerful countries, Ecuador had no choice but to protect its own national interest and withdraw the resolution. Other countries in need of this resolution were likewise hesitant to take the lead for fear of endangering existing ties with the US. Russia, unfazed by threats from the US, would eventually take up the cause for these embattled countries and support passage of the measure.

This recent opposition to breastfeeding by the US is nothing new – the breastmilk versus infant formula debate has persisted despite decades of research proving breastmilk as the best nutrition for babies. What is surprising, however, is the US' brazen attempt to thwart the resolution by resorting to tactics that are a clear overreaction, not unlike throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Threats of withdrawal of economic support and military aid are a staple of this current US administration – but over breastfeeding? Why would the US go to such lengths to derail a resolution in support of a major public health issue?

Conflicts of interest in public health should lead us to ask who stands to benefit the most from non-passage of this resolution. The major multinational milk companies such as Nestle, Danone, Mead Johnson, and Abbott have been quick to distance themselves from this issue, citing that they “strongly support breastfeeding,” and “have not and would never lobby any government to oppose breastfeeding policies anywhere in the world.” History though, says otherwise. There have been multiple documented reports of milk companies violating the International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes by pushing for aggressive marketing of baby formula and food, providing gifts and samples to mothers and health workers, sponsorships of meetings and travel, even payments to health professionals as incentives to recommend formula over breastmilk. Not surprisingly, these tactics have been most successful not in the United States, but in poorer countries where breastfeeding safeguards are not as stringent (hence the need for the WHA resolution).

Israel is no stranger to this policy. As a response to growing numbers of reported violations, the Israel Pediatrics Association in 2017 issued a position paper stating that health professionals should encourage breastfeeding and avoid suggesting to parents stop it or promoting the use of baby formula. While there is a clear preference for breastfeeding in Israel especially in the early months, there has been a sudden drop in breastfeeding rates owing to shifts to formula feeding. The Philippines is likewise in a similar situation, where we have our own legislation Executive Order 51 or known as the Milk Code. However, exclusive breastfeeding rates remain below target, 1 in 3 Filipino children are stunted, and more than a million children are largely at risk for malnutrition. It is not uncommon to find doctors and health professionals being recruited by milk companies to give lectures to promote the use of infant formula. Just recently, it was discovered that milk companies were principal donors in a major government forum on nutrition – a clear violation of both local and international policy. Public health advocates decried this blatant lobbying with government as this exposed the massive influence of milk companies to dictate public health and nutrition issues.

In response to the growing disapproval of US actions at the WHA, US President Donald Trump has called the NY Times story as fake news, tweeting “The U.S. strongly supports breast feeding but we don’t believe women should be denied access to formula. Many women need this option because of malnutrition and poverty.”

Trump’s statement appears to be again misinformed as it is particularly during times of malnutrition and poverty that breastfeeding must be sustained. Propaganda is rife on how malnourished mothers and those living in poor conditions cannot breastfeed due to lack of milk or having milk of inadequate quality. This is far from the scientific truth that shows that malnourished mothers can breastfeed and their milk quality is still far superior to formula. The Philippines has had multiple experiences with disasters and emergencies where it has also been proven time and again that mothers can and should continue to breastfeed even in extreme conditions and should be provided a supportive environment to do so, rather than falling back on formula.

Support for breastfeeding does not mean denying formula for those who need it. Mothers should have a choice – but it should be an informed choice. When all is said and done, the decision to breastfeed should be made on fair grounds, free from the influence of milk companies and governments making threats of economic and political sanctions.

Andrew just recently completed work with UNICEF Philippines in scaling up the national program on Severe Acute Malnutrition. Currently he is on short-term engagement with Asian Development Bank for health emergency and rehabilitation, while being a full-time father to his newborn son and (together with his wife) advocate for health and nutrition issues such as breastfeeding.



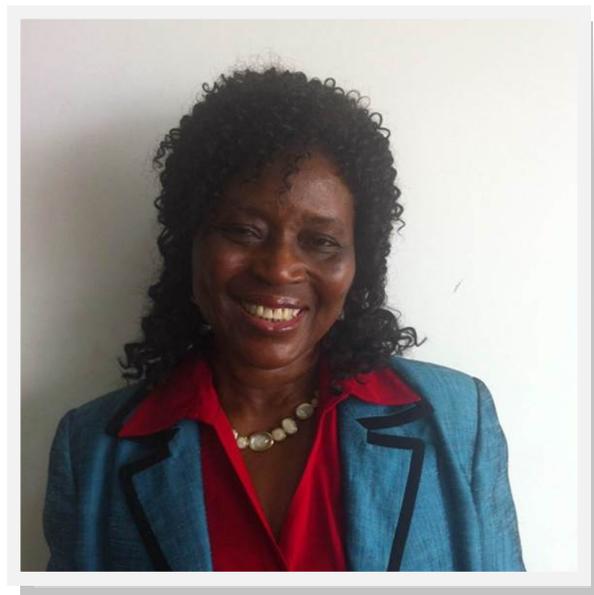
Highlighting an Alumna—Dr. Angela Benson (Liberia | IMPH 1990)

“Retired but not Tired” ([read about her pre-retirement career here](#))

Dr. Angela Benson is a Leader in global health, medical education, health policy, health sector management, program design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. She has worked in the public health sector, the private health sector and the United Nations Organizations of UNICEF and WHO.

Dr. Benson coordinated health care services in several African Countries (Nigeria, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Republic of Congo and Liberia) especially on Maternal –Child Health as a team leader and visionary. Following her IMPH training at the Hebrew University-Hadassah Braun School of Public Health in Israel, she worked as a National Health Officer for UNICEF during the civil conflicts in Liberia, then moved on to work for the WHO as an epidemiologist, then a Country Representative and retired as a WHO/AFRO Regional Adviser on Emergency & Humanitarian Action.

Since retirement in 2011, Dr. Benson has continued her tremendous service and contribution to Liberia’s Health Sector. As a manager and policy adviser to the central Ministry of Health (2012–2017), she provided oversight, technical, managerial and administrative support to government programs. She was the Foundation Manager for the Flagship Ministry of Health’s Fixed Amount Reimbursement Allowance (FARA) Program supported by USAID. With this Project, the Ministry of Health is reimbursed when they meet agreed upon, and independently verified targets in their National Health Plan . The Project is now being replicated in other African Countries. Dr. Benson was the second Secretary General to the newly established Post-graduate Medical Residency Program in Liberia – the Liberia College of Physicians and Surgeons (LCPS). She is currently an Examiner of the West African College of Physicians (WACP) with a focus on post-graduate qualifications for Membership and Fellowship in Community Medicine and its sub-specialties.



Dr. Benson co-founded the Global Health Innovations and Action Foundation (GHIA Foundation) - an International NGO with the aim of helping to reduce disease burden and mortality of women and children in low-income countries. The Foundation's mission is to ensure that women live healthier and longer lives by providing technical support to national governments in Sub-Saharan Africa to strengthen their health system and deliver positive results. She is also the co-founder and deputy CEO of Benson Hospital Inc. in Paynesville, Liberia.

Dr. Benson is a member of several national and international professional organizations including the Country Coordination Mechanism for HIV/AIDS, TB & Malaria in Ethiopia and Lesotho. She is a member of the AFREHealth Consortium, Public Health Association-Liberia, the Liberia Medical and Dental Association (LMDA), Fellow of the Liberia College of Physicians & Surgeons (FLCPS) and Fellow of the West African College of Physician (FWACP). She has co-authored and published medical articles and chapters on the Situation Analysis of the Health of Women and Children in Liberia. She was part of the Ministry of Health Consultants who wrote the comprehensive document: "The Investment Case: Building a Resilient Health System in Liberia, Post-Ebola". Dr. Benson's work has been exemplary at every stage making her an asset to her family, the community, the church and the Nation.

She is married to Dr. Jimi O. Benson and they have three adult children and several fostered children.



News from the School

The Braun School was well represented at the recent Hebrew University Faculty of Medicine Prize Ceremony for 2018.

Our School Director Prof. Ora Paltiel received the Award for Excellence in Pre-Clinical Teaching! Dr. Chen Stein-Zamir, Adjunct Senior Lecturer at our School and District Health Officer of Jerusalem, was a recipient of an Award for Excellent Ph.D. Thesis, which was completed under the mentorship of Prof. Avi Israel.

Dr. Amani Zuaiter, Family Medicine Intern, received the Medical Internship Award for Excellence

IMPH student (now graduate) Dr. Obsie Baissa was awarded a Prize for Excellent Masters Thesis for her IMPH thesis on "Parent-of-origin effect of genes related to glucose metabolism on glycemic traits". Dr. Hagit Hochner served as her thesis advisor.

Three Israeli MPH students also received the Prize for Excellent Masters Thesis: -Ms. Reshit Bazer (Prof. Ronit Calderon, Advisor) , Ms. Tami Siminovsky (Dr. Milka Donchin, Advisor) and Ms. Ester Friedman-(Prof. Ronit Calderon, Advisor) Chernofsky .

Congratulations to all prize/award recipients - you who serve as an inspiration to us all!



הפקולטה לרפואה
FACULTY OF MEDICINE

פרס הפקולטה לעבודות גמר M.Sc. מצטיינות



גב' ראסית בייזר

עבור עבודתה:

הערכת השיפוח של נשים הרות בירושלים למהמים סביבתיים מסוג פטאלאמיים באמצעות שאלון ודגימות שתן

המנחה: פרופ' רונית קלדרון, ביה"ס לבריאות הציבור
הפרס מוענק מקרן ע"ש ד"ר אדם פדרגין ז"ל



גב' תמי סימינובסקי

עבור עבודתה:

ביקורת מהימנות ותוקף של מסמך הסטנדרטים בתחום הבריאות לבתי הספר בישראל

המנחה: ד"ר מילכה דנוחין, ביה"ס לבריאות הציבור
הפרס מוענק מקרן ע"ש ד"ר יוסף סושצ'ין ז"ל



גב' אסתר פרידמן צ'רנופסקי

עבור עבודתה:

הקשר בין אופן האכלת הלידה לבין סיבוכי השלבים השני והשלישי של הלידה

המנחה: פרופ' רונית קלדרון, ביה"ס לבריאות הציבור
ד"ר אורנה רייכמן, המרכז הרפואי שערי צדק
הפרס מוענק מקרן ע"ש ד"ר יוסף סושצ'ין ז"ל



DR. BAISSA OBSIE

For her work

Parent of origin effect of genes related to glucose metabolism on glycemic traits

המנחה: ד"ר חגית הוכנר, ביה"ס לבריאות הציבור
הפרס מוענק מקרן ע"ש סולי יעקב מולכו ז"ל

פרס הפקולטה למורים מצטיינים בהוראה פרה-קלינית



פרופ' אורה פלטיאל
בית הספר לבריאות הציבור

פרס הפקולטה לעבודות מצטיינות לתואר דוקטור בפילוסופיה Ph.D.



ד"ר חן שטיין-זמיר

עבור עבודתה:

הערכת שיעורי קבלת החיסונים בהתאם לתוכנית חיסוני השיגרה לילדים בישראל, בקרב תינוקות ופעוטות וחקר המאפיינים וגורמי הרקע הקשורים לקבלת החיסונים במועד ובמלאם ביחס לתוכנית השיגרה

המנחה: פרופ' אבי ישראלי, בית הספר לבריאות הציבור
הפרס מוענק מקרן ע"ש ד"ר צבי וסרמן ז"ל וד"ר גרשון פרייל ז"ל

פרס הפקולטה לרופאים מתמחים מצטיינים



ד"ר אמאני זעיתר

החוג לרפואת המשפחה

הממליץ: פרופ' אמנון להר, ראש החוג לרפואת המשפחה
הפרס מוענק מקרן ע"ש ד"ר צבי וסרמן ז"ל וד"ר גרשון פרייל ז"ל

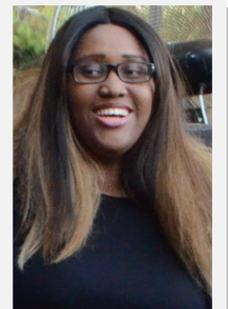
Alumni News

Congratulations to Dr. Josephine Ojiambo (Kenya | IMPH 1989), the immediate past Deputy Secretary General at the Commonwealth Secretariat received the 2018 “Caring Citizen of the World Award” from the International Council for Caring Communities (ICCC), a New York-based not-for-profit organization with Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Although some 35 renowned world leaders have received the prestigious award since 1996, Dr. Ojiambo becomes its first African recipient.



The master thesis of Dr. Tevfik Bayram (Turkey | IMPH 2016) [“Determinants of health behavior inequalities: a cross-sectional study from Israel”](#) was recently published in the journal *Health Promotion International*. Congratulations to Tevfik and his thesis adviser Dr. Milka Donchin!

Dr. Mariama Murray (Sierra Leone | IMPH 2015) is a co-author of [“Hidden dangers-prevalence of blood borne pathogens, hepatitis B, C, HIV and syphilis, among blood donors in Sierra Leone in 2016: opportunities for improvement: a retrospective, cross-sectional study”](#) recently published in the Pan African Medical Journal. Good work, Mariama!



We gladly share Dr. Olusola Oresanya’s (Nigeria | IMPH 2007) [poster presented in the 7th MIM Pan African Malaria Conference, Dakar, Senegal, April 2018](#). The poster presents research about Malaria-NTD-WASH implementation in schools in Nigeria. Well done!

Ajay Phatak (India | IMPH 2008) and Kandarp Talati (India | IMPH 2017) will be presenting six abstracts at the European Academy of Pediatrics Society (EAPS 2018) annual conference in Paris at the end of October. Great news, Ajay and Kandarp! Keep up the good work!



Dr. Wen Peng (China | IMPH 2016) presented her abstract "Obese adults and stunting children in urban settled Tibetan communities on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau" in the 7th Asian Dietetic Congress, Jul 6-8, 2018, Hong Kong. Good job, Wen!



Mazal Tov (Best of Luck & Congratulations) to Dr. Rene Andrew Bucu and his wife Myka on the arrival of baby Alay! Our best wishes for good health, happiness and joy as a family!



Alumni Visit the School

Prof. Segun Afolabi (Nigeria | IMPH 2005), certified M&E instructor and senior faculty member in the Department of Community Health, Faculty of Clinical Sciences, Obafemi Awolowo University (Ile Ife, Nigeria) ran an intensive 4-day M&E workshop to our International MPH class within the framework of the Community Oriented Primary Care (COPC) Workshop taught by Prof. Yehuda Neumark and Dr. Yael Bar-Zeev (a health-promotion expert and public health physician who is joining the School as the newest member of our academic staff). The workshop was indeed intensive and the students worked extremely hard, but hopefully they all gained valuable skills for their public health toolbox.



Dr. Catalina Lopez-Quintero (Colombia | IMPH 2003, PhD 2012) visited the school on June 28th and presented a seminar on "Cannabis use patterns: the influence of neurocognitive, psychiatric and policy factors", based mostly on her own research. This inspiring talk, as our students described it, was a great way to conclude the second semester.



Dr. Joshua Rosenbloom (USA | IMPH 2007) and Ksenia Kubasova (Russia | IMPH 2013) visited the school (on different occasions). We were thrilled to see Josh and Ksenia and to hear all about their life and career post-graduation, and their next endeavors!

