

IMPH ALUMNI NEWSLETTER



הפקולטה לרפואה
FACULTY OF MEDICINE

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Messages from the IMPH Team

Outgoing IMPH Director Prof. Hagit Hochner

Dear IMPH Alumni,

On September 17, 2025, the 50th IMPH cohort celebrated its graduation. Because the students had to leave Israel due to the war with Iran in June, the ceremony was held in a hybrid format with the support of HUJI's multimedia department. Even so, the presence of our outstanding graduates was strongly felt in the auditorium. We were privileged to welcome in person, among other distinguished guests, Sir Trevor Pears of Pears Foundation and Professor Alfredo Morabia, Epidemiologist at CUNY and Columbia University, and until recently Chief Editor of the *American Journal of Public Health*. The ceremony was both beautiful and deeply moving, and nearly 500 friends, families, alumni, and colleagues watched the broadcast online from across the globe.

As I shared during the ceremony, I am stepping down as Director of the IMPH after three years in this role. Leading this program has been a true privilege and honor, an experience I will always treasure. I am truly grateful to the Braun School, to our students, and to our alumni for entrusting me with this responsibility. I would also like to thank the remarkable IMPH team: Ms. Natalie Poni Elhadad, Administrative Coordinator; Ms. Irena Sama'an, Academic Secretary; Dr. Ronit Sinnreich, Braun School Academic Coordinator; and Ms. Adi Seri, IMPH Social Coordinator. Every year has brought greater challenges, and every year you have risen to meet them, working tirelessly and with extraordinary dedication. I also wish to acknowledge the invaluable efforts of Dr. Maureen Malowany and Ms. Shira Nanavati in strengthening social and professional connections with and among our alumni and partners worldwide.

The program will now continue under the leadership of Professor Elliot Berry, former Director of the Braun School and a long-time teacher and mentor within the IMPH. I wish him every success as he takes on this role.

Reflecting on my speech at the graduation, I quoted Professor Morabia's observation that the Public Health Approach can only be effective when it is fair, democratic, universal, and science-based. Sadly, these values are under threat globally, including in our own countries. Too often, political leaders fail to place health, equity, and social justice at the center of their decisions. While this reality can be discouraging, it must instead serve as our call to action. It is our professional duty to continue believing in change and to work towards it, however difficult the circumstances.

Yours truly, and always part of the IMPH family,

Hagit



Incoming IMPH Director Prof. Elliot Berry

Dear IMPH Alumni,

I am honored to serve as the new Director of the IMPH. Much has changed since I was last

involved in its management, and I look forward to the challenge of guiding the Program forward.

My heartfelt thanks go to Professor Hagit Hochner, whose outstanding leadership, tireless dedication, and personal care have shaped the IMPH into the success it is today. She will be a hard act to follow—Mabrouk and Mazal Tov, Hagit, as you continue to shine in our School of Public Health.

Gratitude is also due to the wonderful IMPH team: Ms. Natalie Poni Elhadad, Administrative Coordinator; Ms. Irena Sama'an, Academic Administrator; Dr. Ronit Sinnreich, Braun School Academic Coordinator; Ms. Adi Seri, Social Coordinator; Dr. Maureen Malowany and Ms. Shira Nanavati, who keep our Alumni network vibrant; Ms. Edna Jospe Perez, our indefatigable Braun School Administrator; and Professor Ronit Calderon-Margalit, outgoing School Director, for her steadfast support. Welcome as well to Professor Chen Stein Zamir, our new School Director, and thanks to Professor Adam Rose, who will serve as IMPH Deputy Director.

One of our first challenges will be integrating AI into teaching—an essential tool, but one to be used wisely.

As we recently celebrated Rosh Hashana, I am inspired by Rachel Goldberg-Polin's reflection that the Hebrew word for *crisis* (*Mashber*) also means “birth stool,” symbolizing the pain before new beginnings. May this New Year bring hope and renewal.

I wish you success in your careers and look forward to staying connected—please share your updates and join us for the next Alumni Conference in February 2026.

Shana Tova,

Elliot M. Berry
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Dr. Maureen Malowany

Dear Alumni,

A very warm welcome to our newest alumni – graduates of 2024-2025!!

This period is such a ‘circle of life’. We have said goodbye



to our IMPH Cohort of 2024-2025 and are preparing for our next cohort of 20 students who will start their IMPH Program very soon. We are very grateful for both!

We are also planning our IMPH Alumni West Africa Conference, Abuja, Nigeria – 22-25 February 2026. I met with our co-host – the wonderful team of Miva Open University in Abuja – during a site visit in September. In addition, it was wonderful to have dinner with our alumni based in Abuja. I want to especially thank Kator Igbudu for being our liaison with his University and facilitating for me a very easy and productive visit.

We will come back to you all very soon through our WhatsApp groups to confirm your attendance as well as participation in the Conference through presentations or panels. More on the details in a few weeks.

Wishing us all a very good year!

Regards,

Maureen
IMPH Alumni Academic Coordinator
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Shira Nanavati



Dear Alumni,

First, I'd like to extend a big congratulations to the 50th cohort of the IMPH! It was wonderful to see your smiling faces virtually during the September graduation, and I'm so looking forward to hearing about all the incredible work you are already doing in your home countries.

I've now been serving as the IMPH Alumni Communications Coordinator for two and a half years, and I truly feel privileged to work with such an extraordinary community of public health professionals. It has been inspiring to see new initiatives take shape—like the *Bridges*

of Science program—through which I’ve had the joy of getting to know more of you personally and even hosting some of you in my home.

I’m especially excited about the upcoming 2026 IMPH Alumni West Africa Regional Conference. In the coming weeks, we’ll be finalizing participation and developing an inspiring program to showcase the incredible work IMPH alumni are doing around the world. I can’t wait to see you all in Abuja!

Please stay in touch—and take care.

Warm regards,

Shira Nanavati
IMPH Alumni Communications Coordinator
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Celebrating the 50th IMPH Cohort: A Virtual Graduation Honoring Resilience and Global Impact

On Wednesday, September 17, 2025, the Braun School of Public Health and Community Medicine at the Hebrew University–Hadassah celebrated the graduation of the 50th cohort of the International Master of Public Health (IMPH) program. This milestone event—marking the program’s golden jubilee—reflecting the extraordinary circumstances of the year. Due to the university’s decision to prioritize student safety amid the intensified conflict between Israel and Iran, in June, 2025, the IMPH administration transitioned to remote learning and arranged for students to return home early. Despite the distance, the virtual ceremony—attended by faculty, alumni, and families worldwide—was filled with warmth, pride, and excitement for this exceptional cohort of public health leaders.

The program featured greetings from university and faculty leadership, including Prof. Eli

Pikarsky, Prof. Ronit Calderon-Margalit, and Prof. Hagit Hochner, as well as distinguished guests such as Amb. (Ret.) Yossi Gal and Amb. Irit Savion of MASHAV. The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Norah Akong'o Obudho, 2009, Kenya, who spoke on *"A New Era of Public Health Leadership."*

Special honors included the Jeremy D. Kark Legacy Prize awarded to Joseph Nyero, Uganda, and the Dr. Osnat Keidar Memorial Prize awarded to Elisabeth Yango, Cameroon. Class representative Neema Dashina, Tanzania, reflected on the cohort's journey, characterized by resilience, camaraderie, and unwavering commitment to public health.

IMPH 50 graduate Leon Josiah created this moving video as a tribute to his class, which was shown at the end of the graduation. Click [here](#) to watch the video, and yes Leon is the one singing!

Alumni Spotlight

Norah Obudho, 2025 IMPH Graduation Keynote Speaker



Dr. Norah Akong'o Obudho Inspires Graduates with a Call to Lead Boldly in a Changing World

At the 2025 IMPH Graduation Ceremony, IMPH alumna, Dr. Norah Akong'o Obudho delivered a powerful virtual keynote titled *"A New Era of Public Health Leadership."*

Drawing on her 18 years of experience leading transformative health initiatives across East and West Africa, Dr. Obudho challenged graduates to confront the world's most pressing issues –pandemics,

climate change, inequity, and the erosion of social trust—with innovation, empathy, and collaboration. “You are stepping into a new era where public health leadership is not just an asset but a necessity,” she urged.

A physician and public health leader with a distinguished record of service, Dr. Obudho has held senior roles with the Gates Foundation, USAID, CDC, the World Bank, and most recently as East Africa Director for *Women Lift Health*, where she expanded leadership programs empowering women across the region. She previously served with Planned Parenthood Federation of America, the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation, and Mildmay Kenya.

Norah is currently pursuing an MBA in Healthcare Management. She is a certified professional coach and published author, Dr. Obudho continues to champion women’s and youth leadership in health.

The Bridges of Science Program 2025 Awardees

The Bridges of Science (BoS) Program is an initiative through which the Weizmann Institute of Science offers an exceptional opportunity to outstanding, recently graduated IMPH students from low- and lower-middle-income countries—particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa—to serve as visiting students at the Institute and gain hands-on exposure to basic science research for a period of three months. The program was jointly conceived and developed by Prof. Hagit Hochner, former Director of the IMPH Program, and Prof. Neta Regev-Rudzki, Principal Investigator at the Weizmann Institute of Science, whose research focuses on the biological aspects of the malaria parasite.

The 2025 Bridges of Science awardees include: Neema Dashina, Tanzania, 2025, who will join the lab of Prof. Michal Sharon, Mass Spectrometry Meets Protein Degradation: Decoding Cellular Mechanisms; Nicaise Gimeya, DRC, 2024, who will join the lab of Prof. Eli Arama,

Programmed Cell Death and Cellular Destruction in Development; Ronald Kombe 2025, Tanzania, who will join the lab of Prof. Eran Elinav, Host-Microbiome Interactions in Health and Disease; Joseph Nyero 2025, Uganda, who will join the lab of Prof. Ofer Shoshani, Chromosome Catastrophes in Cancer; and Noela Nsah 2025, Cameroon, who will join the lab of Prof. Ulyana Shimanovich, Natural Silk Biomaterials.

Pears Seed Grant Awardee



Daniel Israel Samuelsen, 2024, Myanmar, has been awarded a Pears Seed Grant to conduct a research project in Myanmar titled *The MICRO-WELL Trial*.

The study investigates whether daily supplementation with 10 grams of microgreen powder over a 60-day period can reduce fatigue and improve nutritional status among non-pregnant women of reproductive age, 18–49 years, in Hlaing Tharyar, Yangon.

Using a waitlist-controlled design, participants at risk of malnutrition are randomized to either receive the supplement immediately—under nurse supervision—or after study completion. Key outcomes include changes in fatigue levels, BMI, and self-reported symptoms.



Alumni Updates

Empowering Innovation in Serbia: Four-Day Training with Israeli Experts Led by IMPH Alumna, Marija Milić

Congratulations to Dr. Marija Milić, 2018, Serbia, on her appointment as Director of the Science and Technology Park (STP) Belgrade. In her new role, she hosted the opening of a four-day national training for managers of science and technology parks and other innovation-support organizations, implemented with the support of MASHAV – Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation. The program brings leading Israeli experts to share best practices in entrepreneurship, startup development, and innovation ecosystem building.

The opening ceremony, 12–18 September, was attended by Academician Bela Balint from Serbia's Ministry of Science and H.E. Avivit Bar-Ilan, Ambassador of Israel to Serbia. Lecturers

Rami Gazit and Moti Hirsh Meir from Haifa's Golda Meir MASHAV-Carmel Center led workshops on startup growth, internationalization, and strategic leadership.

In her remarks, Dr. Milić credited the IMPH program in Israel for shaping her career and inspiring her commitment to innovation. She highlighted her vision to strengthen Serbia's innovation ecosystem—particularly in AI, healthtech, and biotech—by fostering collaboration between science, technology, and medicine to drive real-world impact.





From a Rented Bar to a National Model for Health Equity in Burundi: Alexis Nizigiyimana



Dr. Alexis Nizigiyimana, 2019, Burundi, founded *Ubuntu Village of Life (UVL)*—which began in a rented bar during the pandemic and has since grown into a full-service hospital and national hub for maternal and child health. Supported by Madiro, the U.S. Embassy, McGill University, Rotary International, and the Burundian Ministry of Health, UVL now serves over 40,000 patients and has been formally integrated into Burundi's free maternal and under-five care system, ensuring sustainability through government reimbursement.

Beyond healthcare, UVL promotes women's empowerment, youth leadership, and food security—proving that visionary leadership and global partnerships can drive the Sustainable Development Goals from the ground up. Dr. Alexis is now pursuing a PhD at Ben-Gurion University focused on health financing reforms toward Universal Health Coverage.

Click [here](#) to learn more about this incredible initiative which is transforming healthcare in Burundi.

Congratulations to Akinsola Akinumi, 2021, Nigeria, for successfully completing his Doctor of Philosophy programme in Public Health (Epidemiology) with distinction, and as the best-graduating PhD student in the Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences, Adeleke University, Ede, Nigeria.



Yvette Mbewe, 2024, Zambia, has been selected for the 2025 Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, the flagship program of the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI). A dedicated public health professional and changemaker, Yvette is participating in the Public Management track at the University of California–Davis in Sacramento, where she



will join outstanding young leaders from across Sub-Saharan Africa for intensive academic and leadership training.

Her selection reflects her deep commitment to strengthening community health and governance. Looking back on her time at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Yvette credits the IMPH program with shaping her global health perspective and equipping her with the tools to lead impactful change.



She applied for the Mandela Washington Fellowship in September 2024, while completing her Master's paper on healthcare waste management—a topic that continues to guide her professional vision.

Delia Haustein, Peru, 1987, is an active member of *Perusan*, an alliance of 22 NGOs and 7 specialists formed in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic to strengthen food security and nutrition in Peru.

As part of her work with *Perusan*, Delia was invited to participate in the Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit in March 2025.

Pictured right: Delia in conversation with SUN youth leaders at the civil society pre-N4G summit.



Congratulations to Amal Khayat on completing her doctorate under the supervision of Professors Yael Bar-Zeev and Hagai Levine. Amal was also the recipient of the SRNT-E Early Career Travel Award for the SRNT-E 2025 Conference in Romania, where she presented her research titled “*Philip Morris International’s IQOS Legislation-Responsive Advertising in Israel.*”



Congratulations to PhD candidate Selin Girgin, 2021, Turkey, on receiving the Outstanding Abstract Award at the Joint Annual Meeting of the International Society of Exposure Science and the International Society for Environmental Epidemiology (ISES–ISEE 2025), held in Atlanta, Georgia, USA, from August 17–20, 2025.



Publications

Publications by Faculty, Lecturers

Elliot M. Berry

[Providing food security in Gaza for the “day after”](#)

Adam Rose

[Improving Discrimination in Predicting Level of Care Needed for Patients Admitted with Pneumonia](#)

[Incorporating clinical and demographic data into the Elixhauser Comorbidity Model: deriving and validating an enhanced model in a tertiary hospital's internal medicine department](#)

[Responsibility of follow-up regarding medical recommendations in primary care and challenging patients: The perspective of doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and administrative staff](#)

[Teamwork Among Primary Care Staff to Achieve Regular Follow-Up of Chronic Patients](#)

[Unplanned Transfers to a Physical Hospital Among Patients Admitted to a Hospital-at-Home Service](#)

Raanan Raz, Selin Girgin

[Prenatal exposure to ambient temperature and preterm birth: a historical cohort](#)

Publications by Alumni

Jonathan Abuga

[Prevalence of Cooking-Related Burns in Peri-Urban Cameroon, Ghana, and Kenya by Fuel Type](#)

Marija Milic

[Associations of night eating with body mass index and waist circumference among health sciences students living in a post-conflict region](#)

[The influence of face masks use, immunity boosters and visiting risky places on mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic in Serbia and Republic of Srpska \(Bosnia and Herzegovina\)](#)

[The trend in national childhood immunization program coverage throughout Serbian communities in Kosovo and Metohija from 2003 to 2022: pre-COVID-19 period vs. COVID-19 pandemic](#)

Tevfik Bayram

[How narration could unfold oppression: insights from the experiences of the Kurds in access to Turkish healthcare services](#)

Note: This is Tevfik's second publication from the research he conducted with the funding support from the Pears Seed Grant.

Thom Salamba

[Predictors of Health-Workforce Job Satisfaction in Primary Care Settings: Insights from a Cross-Sectional Multi-Country Study in Eight African Countries](#)

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