



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

June 2013



Director's Message

Dear Alumni,

As Yehuda Neumark mentioned in the previous Newsletter, on January 1, 2013 I took over the post of IMPH director. Yehuda is now Director of the Braun School, and is applying his infectious enthusiasm and dedication to all of the School's academic programs. For the last twenty years I have been on Faculty in the Braun School, and have supervised the Master's theses and papers of many of our alumni. For the past three years I have also directed the Research Forum, enabling me to get to know all of our recent IMPH scholars personally.

I look forward to the challenge and rewards of directing this program. I strongly believe in its mission, its content and its message. This belief, I hope, will enable me to successfully lead this program in the face of a super-busy personal schedule of clinical work, teaching, research and of course, family. And I am sure it will sustain me in my endeavors to maintain and enhance the School's performance and outreach.

We have had an eventful few months! The highlight was the 2nd Pears Alumni Reunion and Conference held in Jerusalem from February 12-20, 2013. The conference was a resounding success for all involved. We were fortunate to have many of our Pears scholars from Africa return to us, in addition to IMPH scholars from Thailand, Russia, Kazakhstan, Macedonia, Dominican Republic and Turkey. Hats off to you for having made the effort to come!!

Altogether 60 IMPH graduates made the "pilgrimage" to Jerusalem and were privileged to participate in wonderful workshops by Everold Hosein, Gary Pakes, Michelle Williams, Alex Ezeh and a high level team from ASPHER. The conference was both scientifically stimulating and practical. Many of our alumni presented their current work, challenges and dilemmas and received valuable feedback from their peers. We were honoured by the presence of the University President, Prof. Menachem Ben Sasson; the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Prof. Eran Leitersdorf; representatives of the Foreign Ministry; former Directors of the Braun School; Faculty AND Trevor Pears himself, with staff of the Foundation at the opening event held at the Israel Museum. We are preparing a report and audiovisual materials from the Conference which will soon be available to all IMPH alumni through our website. I would personally like to thank the organizing committee: Yehuda Neumark, Orly Manor, Ronit Calderon, Maureen Malowany, Michael Botstein, the conference co-ordinator Wendy Serlin, and all the Braun School staff for contributing to the success of this memorable event.

Our current students are well into their second semester courses and projects, and each has chosen a topic and supervisor for the Masters thesis or Paper. We have travelled together to Beersheva, Caesaria and Haifa. Many partook in a traditional Passover *seder* hosted by faculty and generous Jerusalemites. Many students participated in Israel's Remembrance Day ceremonies and the class had a trip to the Holocaust museum, Yad Vashem. As you can see we remain committed to academic rigor and an intensive didactic program, while at the same time exposing our students to the cultural wealth and historical legacy of the country.

We recently parted from Michael Botstein who, as Pears Alumni Coordinator made extraordinary efforts to reach out to our many alumni and to establish new academic alumni programs such as the Seed Grant and Mentorship programs. I personally would like to thank him for his tremendous efforts on the School's behalf. Michal Guttman, our administrator has also left and we wish her the best in her future endeavors.

We have much to look forward to, including Regional meetings, an upcoming accreditation process from ASPHER, continued collaboration with the Hebrew University's GLOCAL and Rehovot Agricultural and Food Science Programs, also supported by the Pears Foundation. This is the time of year where we receive scores of applications from around the world, sent by eager candidates wanting to join next year's IMPH class. As usual, we encourage our alumni to "send us your best", so that we can continue the tradition of excellence and contribution to global Public Health for which the Braun School is renowned!

All the best,

Ora Paltiel, IMPH Director.



The Pears IMPH Alumni Conference

The second Pears IMPH Alumni Conference took place in Jerusalem from February 12-20, 2013. Sixty alumni (of which 37 are Pears graduates) from Cameroon, Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Macedonia, Nigeria, Palestinian Authority, Russia, South Sudan, Tanzania, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, as well as 26 current IMPH students attended. The program included various workshops, a symposium on Global Issues in Reproductive Health, an opening event and dinner (including a tour) at the Israel Museum, a day trip to Masada and the Dead Sea, and more. The workshops focused on 1) public health advocacy and strategies for communicating public health messages; 2) public health ethics; and 3) grant-writing and fundraising skill development for public health research and programs. Participants were also coached on coalition building. A high-level delegation from ASPHER (the Association of Schools of Public Health, European Region), presented a workshop on its structure, activities and accreditation process.

Participants were given an opportunity to share their experiences professionally and socially and to present their work to their colleagues, as well as have time to interact with their peers. Old friendships were consolidated and many important new contacts were made. A solid foundation was laid for networking among Pears' and other IMPH alumni.

The conference was made possible by a generous grant from the Pears Foundation, which has supported numerous African IMPH students since 2004. The Foundation has recently agreed to fund and facilitate professional activities, networking, continuing education and research support for Pears IMPH alumni. This Conference was part of this framework of alumni activities.

The Conference was hailed as a great success by the participants, invited speakers, IMPH Faculty and Conference organizers. Visitors from the press, the Hebrew University, ASPHER and the Foreign Ministry were moved by the wonderful spirit of camaraderie, studious atmosphere and sense of purpose demonstrated by the conference community as a whole. This summary report contains details of the conference schedule, participants, speakers and feedback received. We are grateful for the generous support and unparalleled vision of the Pears Foundation for making this event possible, and for the presence of Dr. Trevor Pears, the Executive Chair of the Foundation, at the opening event.

Sincerely,

The Organizing Committee: Yehuda Neumark, Ora Paltiel, Orly Manor, Ronit Calderon-Margalit, Maureen Malowany, Michael Botstein, Wendy Serlin.

Impressions from the Conference taken from the blog of one of the current students

Day 1

The Pears IMPH Alumni Conference kicked off with an exploration of the integral role of communications within public health. Dr. Everold Hosein, Senior Adviser of WHO, led students and alumni in the Public Health Advocacy/Communications Workshop, sharing both his practical insights and the wisdom he has gained through his professional successes and challenges.

Hosein's workshop delved into the significant conflict between an individual's desires and wants, which are often out of sync with what is healthy, and behaviors which might not feel as good, but bring about a healthier lifestyle. How do we as public health officials bridge that gap? Hosein believes that communication is the key - that public health officials must connect to the consumer. Even if we have fantastic, strong solutions, if these are not in line with the reality of what people need and want they will never accept what we are "selling." This process involves knowing what you're up against and being realistic about the norms, values and desires held by individuals in a given community or population, and going beyond one's self to listen to the needs of the consumer. Hosein spoke at length about the "COMBI" method, also known as Communication-For-Behavioral-Impact, which he has worked with extensively at the WHO. It sheds light on practical steps which public health officials can follow to build strong interventions that ideally bridge the gap - not only influencing individuals to healthy behaviors, but most importantly to stick to them! As a student of public health I was excited by the ideas and methods which Hosein presented to us. He brought to light significant themes for both aspiring public health professionals, and those already in the field. I feel that Hosein addressed the real challenges which individuals face when trying to change their vision into reality and create a significant change in their environment.

Day 2

The day began with a continuation of Hosein's Public Health Advocacy/Communications workshop. Hosein not only delved deeper into the methodology of COMBI, but proved the power of communication through his own masterful and amusing skills as an orator and educator. In order to express the significant role which appearance plays in communicating credibility and expertise, Hosein used himself as the model - starting with the removal of his tie, then his jacket... providing the audience with a number of clothing changes which not only made us laugh, but deftly proved his point. Student Francisco Sarmiento (Colombia) felt that Hosein's workshop was entertaining while also presenting

a unique and comprehensive methodology for behavioral change, going beyond the context of the classroom. "I appreciated the way Hosein engaged the audience with real life examples of problems we might face in the field, and how best to approach them." For many of the students, communication is an essential aspect of their daily work in their home countries. The COMBI method arms students and professionals with a new model which embraces communications as a practical and powerful means to achieve goals. Student Londiwe Hlope (Swaziland) believes that she will incorporate COMBI into her work in community health upon her return. "COMBI is definitely something new," Hlope said. "I appreciate that it is more practical than theoretical, really giving me clear steps to meet my objectives in the field." Hosein's workshop was undoubtedly an entertaining and informative way to start the conference.

Day 3

Most mornings don't usually begin with questions about whether you would be inclined to save the life of a stranger, your grandmother or a bald eagle. Dr. Barry Pakes started his Public Health Ethics workshop by addressing IMPH students and alumni with these very questions. Pakes prompted the audience to explore their values and ethical beliefs by asking thoughtful questions. Participants not only delved into some of the more philosophically challenging aspects of public health, but were also encouraged to engage their colleagues in discussion about the ethical dilemmas which many have faced. Student Evelyn Kiamani (Kenya) found this to be an opportunity to learn from alumni and hear about their work. "It was really inspiring to hear what the alumni have accomplished since graduating," Kiamani said. "It also gives you a chance to step outside the context of a textbook and into the real issues when you're in the field." During the break, students gathered, chatting about Pakes' workshop. They enjoyed that he encouraged participation - arming the audience with clickers, allowing them to dial in their responses to questions and see a bar graph compiling their answers. Pakes brought to light issues which public health professionals deal with daily and often struggle to make sense of. These topics run the gamut of how best to allocate money, deal with sensitive medical cases or reconcile the conflict between honesty and making the desired impact. How do public health professionals identify and resolve ethical issues in the field? Pakes' workshop addressed different schools of thought, perspectives, and legal/ethical systems to approach such issues. However, he presented the I.D.E.A framework as a reliable method to promote ethical behavior in the field. I.D.E.A entails steps and conditions which individuals can follow in order to approach difficult ethical situations. Student Yelena Sigal (Israel) believes that I.D.E.A framework presented by Pakes is a very significant tool when trying to solve problems. "I think I.D.E.A is a really valuable resource in public health," Sigal said. "This workshop definitely gave me some interesting ideas to ponder and some practical skills to implement into my tool box."

Day 4

IMPH students have spent the last several months working hard in the classroom, expanding their brains and building the essential building blocks necessary to public health. The 4th day of the conference brought the students in contact with the innovation and professional expertise born from the very same education which they are now receiving.

The day's speakers included Prof. Michelle Williams, Chair of the Department of Epidemiology at Harvard University, and a handful of IMPH alumni, who discussed research programs in which they have been integrally involved. For student Rene Gerald Galera Jr (Philippines), the highlight of the day was having the opportunity to hear from

presenters who brought great insight into his own future aspirations within public health. "Listening to individuals like Prof. Williams really made me realize that I can make my own path within this field," Galera said. "Seeing as she has a background in epidemiology, global health, and molecular science, I am inspired that I too can put together all of my strengths and interests." Vineet Srivastava (India), current IMPH student, enjoyed learning more about family planning and long-acting contraceptives through IMPH graduate Dr. Solomon's presentation of his work. Srivastava works closely on this topic in his home country. Students expressed overall amazement at hearing the breadth and depth of what former IMPH students have gone on to accomplish, and the innovations they are making in their various fields. Student Jonathan Abel (Kenya) appreciates this opportunity to learn from the knowledge of those around him. "The idea of bringing back IMPH alumni is brilliant," Abel said. "It is amazing that we are able to see the outcome of our education, and I hope one day to come back for such a conference."

Day 5

The symposium on Global Issues in Reproductive Health brought together an exceptional group of public health professionals presenting research on a number of topics, spanning a variety of geographic regions around the world. Presenters included individuals from the Hadassah Hospital staff, such as Prof. Ora Paltiel, IMPH graduates and keynote speaker Prof. Michelle Williams.

Throughout the symposium, I was continuously amazed at the extensive breadth of the material presented, which included new tools, implementation strategies, epidemiological and qualitative research and insights into particulars of women's health in specific countries such as Turkey, Ethiopia and Ghana. I was particularly struck by epidemiologist and public health professional, Prof. Hava Palti, who was recognized at the symposium for her contributions to public health and women's healthcare at the Hebrew University-Hadassah Braun School of Public Health. Palti stressed the significance of using the knowledge acquired through epidemiological studies to create interventions which focus on preventative care and contribute to healthier populations over time. Prof. Palti's genuine passion and insight into future directions of public health was inspiring, especially to someone just about to enter the field. I mention this as an instance where IMPH students were able to step into a space where the concepts which we have learned in the classroom were actually applied, and we are able to experience outcomes in the context of real research and interventions.

I felt that a highlight of the symposium was the presentation by Prof. Pinar Ay, graduate from Turkey. Her research explored the impact of gender roles on "health seeking behavior" throughout pregnancy in Turkey. I found her study to be very thought provoking in its exploration of the cultural complexities and norms which deeply impact health. It was refreshing to step outside of quantitative research to explore public health from a qualitative perspective.

Each and every one of the presentations throughout the symposium was exceptional and deeply informative, shedding light on the real issues which are impacting women around the world. A consistent feature of each speaker was their visible passion and desire to create greater health for women within their populations. It was amazing to be a part of something which represented perspectives from both developing and industrialized nations across the globe, and addressed the diverse needs of women throughout each country and the hurdles which must be overcome.

Day 6

Dr. Alex Ezeh eloquently shared his hopeful vision for research and higher education in Africa. Ezeh expressed his desire of arming African students with the tools and resources necessary to empower and facilitate the growth of research by Africans for Africans.

“You need more than a PhD and a good computer to be a world class researcher,” said Ezeh. He is working to achieve standards of excellence for Africa and its students, through his work at the innovative APHRC/CARTA model.

Student Evelyn Kiamani (Kenya) was inspired by Ezeh’s words. “I am dedicated to working in Africa and building my skills to make a real impact”, Kiamani said. “Ezeh’s presentation made me realize the opportunities that are out there for me, and I am very interested in learning from him at APHRC.” Ezeh’s passion and tireless commitment to bring vision into reality served as an inspiration and a lesson in what can be achieved through dedication and commitment.

Day 6 continued with presentations by as well as speakers from the Association of Schools of Public Health, European Region. One of these was Ilana Levin, who discussed the process of accreditation of schools of public health throughout Europe.

I was struck by this presentation and the initiatives which are being developed around the globe to increase accessibility and excellence in public health education. This experience put my own educational experience into perspective and the exceptional strides being made for populations throughout the world, by creating greater opportunities to pursue an education in public health.

Day 7

The final day of the Pears’ IMPH Alumni Conference summerized all the parts of the past week’s events. Dr. Ezeh gave his final session, with practical advice regarding funding for research and grant writing. This presentation was particularly suitable for the final day, as it gave essential information on the next steps to be taken in connection with the research and epidemiological studies. Ezeh emphasized the impact which our ideas can have on the world and the significance of sharing them. It is not enough to do research – the information must actualize itself in publications and grants to propagate good ideas that can make an impact.

Alum Eta Ngole (Cameroon) said that Ezeh’s presentation gave him information essential for preparing a grant for his own work. “I’ve never attempted grant writing before,” said Ngole, “after listening to Ezeh I feel like it’s something that I can do myself.”

I found the steps given by Ezeh to be extremely helpful and encouraging. He placed an emphasis on accepting the potential of grant rejections and acceptances as part of the process, keeping in mind that it is important to continue presenting your work, regardless of the occasional setback.

The final day of the conference continued with presentations by alumni on current projects in the field and innovations in research. One presentation which stood out for current student Rene Gerald Galera Jr., was the work of graduate Jordan Kyongo (Kenya) about molecular biomarkers among females using nonoxynol-9 (N-9)-barrier gel. “This is a good example of how pure science meets with public health,” said Galera. “It will be interesting to see what innovations will occur in the next few years.” The day ended with both alumni and current students feeling inspired and glad to have had the opportunity to learn from one another. We are all looking forward to seeing what next year’s conference has in store for us!

Throughout the Conference, present students were not only exposed to new and

innovative ideas, but were given a rare opportunity to really see the tangible impact which working in public health can have on the world. It was deeply inspiring to hear what the alumni have accomplished and to see that I and my fellow classmates are standing in the very place in which they once stood.

A bit about me...

My name is Rebecca Millner and I am currently a student at the International Master of Public Health program. For nearly two years I have been working in the field of photojournalism - exploring worlds far beyond my own and telling the stories of the diverse individuals whom I have met.

A Few Final Words from IMPH student, Rene Gerald Galera, Jr.

Good evening, Prof. Neumark, Prof. Paltiel, professors and staff of the Braun School of Public Health and Community Medicine, our distinguished alumni, and my dear classmates

I, together with the rest of the current IMPH class, have never felt so elated in my life. I have met so many inspiring people – from our key speakers and lecturers, to the IMPH graduates who have found their own various niches in the world of public health. For individuals like me with a very limited work experience and who still need to discover themselves and what the Public Health world has to offer, the past nine days are priceless gold nuggets that will forever be treasured. So I would like to take this chance, on behalf of my classmates, to thank two groups of people who made this felicitous meeting a big success.

To the Braun School of Public Health and the Pears Foundation, thank you for arranging this meeting. Getting almost a hundred people and PH luminaries together for more than a week (with a side trip to Masada) is no small feat! This conference not only expanded our circles but also helped us see how we can translate all the theories and concepts we learn in the classroom into concrete and tangible actions. I hope that such endeavors can be sustained in the future, so that when the time comes and members of the current class return as alumni in their own right, we can also pay it forward to the new IMPH students. Toda raba!

To our alumni, who have invested nine precious days from their work and personal lives, to spend time with us IMPH fledglings, share your special stories, and give practical academic and professional advice. All of you have shown us that after graduation we can blaze new trails and be successful too – be it in Afghanistan, in the academe, in our own communities, or even when threatened by tobacco companies. Thank you and we wish you safe journeys! Lehitraot (see you)!

Lastly, Prof. Neumark said during our first day of orientation that our IMPH experience and Israel will forever change our lives. I can say that with just this alumni conference his prediction was realized. I've never felt so lucky and grateful for being part of all of this. In the Philippines we say mabuhay to wish someone long life and best wishes, so mabuhay kayong lahat! Thank you!

Feedback from our Alumni

Norah Obudho from Kenya: The conference was very timely for me and my organization as the key discussions will impact on my work, allowing me to further my network of

Ose Okoye from Nigeria: I consider the time at the conference well spent and I've acquired knowledge that will affect my career for many years to come. It was a pleasure getting to meet everyone and sharing with them, many thanks.

Solomon Worku from Ethiopia: A few words how I felt about the conference: it was quite useful in terms of receiving new insights on current public health issues. The topics chosen for the conference were timely. The organizers should be complimented on getting the right speakers. I had the feeling that the organization was very well thought out, and bringing together alumni from all years and countries made it memorable. I was enlightened, well entertained and taken care of.

Joseph Nuertey from Ghana: For me Jerusalem is always a homecoming. I had many good interactions with special people in the holy land. The warmth that radiated from these experiences will bring memories for a long time to come.

Augustin Nartey: I learnt from the lectures provided by our noble intelligent lecturers from all walks of life. All these ideas will go a long way to impact on my life positively. I would like to thank you and your team for organizing such a wonderful IMPH alumni conference. We are grateful to our sponsors, the Pears Foundation.

Eta Mbongngole from Cameroon: Just wanted to say thanks to you all for the singular opportunity you gave me to attend this alumni reunion as well as efforts put to make it worthwhile. The speakers were great as well as the themes. Had the opportunity to network and meet many others whose lives and careers have been greatly shaped by the time they spent at Braun. Special thanks to Prof. Paltiel for the impromptu and great introductory lesson on Meta-analyses and Systematic Reviews.

Comfort Suku from Nigeria: I want to use this forum to say a big thank you to all the wonderful people that made the conference a huge success. It felt so good to come back home to Jerusalem for a family reunion. I got re-inspired listening to world class speakers and colleagues, and share their experiences. I came back with renewed zeal and will make the most of all I learnt during the conference (formally and informally).

Yuwadee Chompituk from Thailand: We want to say a big toda raba to all of you as well as the Pears Foundation for making the conference a huge success. We would like to express our sincere thanks for the hospitality extended to us during the enjoyable stay in Jerusalem.

Barnabas Natamba from Uganda: Thanks to everyone for the best times we had in Jerusalem. For me every time I visit something new happens in my career and I was so excited to be back and, specially, to make a prayer at the Western Wall.

Jamilya Sadykova from Kazakstan: I was very happy to spend wonderful days in Jerusalem. Feel so much love for Israel, Jerusalem, and our IMPH family.

Norah Obudho from Kenya: I just want to thank you and the team for such excellent work in organising and allowing our participation in this conference. It was good to interact, share and network with our peers.

Yetunde Afolabi from Nigeria: I just want to thank the team for the excellent work in organosong such an inspiring conference. I am forever grateful to the Pears Foundation

for sponsoring the trip As always, I enjoyed being in Israel.

Adesequn Fatusi from Nigeria: Thanks a lot for all you did to make the reunion such a great experience and leaving a lifetime of great memories and positive impact. You are a great model of professionals and excellent individuals.

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CDC STACKS

My name is **Joyce Witt**. I am an alumnus of the Braun School of Public Health and Community Medicine (1998/99) and am working with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Office of the Associate Director for Science, in the Office of Science Quality. I am implementing a broad marketing campaign to build awareness about CDC Stacks, an online repository of free, full-text CDC publications. This resource would be a benefit to share with the alumni and students through the IMPH Alumni Newsletter, for alumni to also share further with the staff in their workplaces.

I am copying a short descriptive blurb below.

CDC Stacks is a free digital repository of publications produced by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). CDC Stacks is composed of curated collections of peer reviewed articles, CDC guidelines and recommendations as well as other publications on a broad range of public health topics. CDC Stacks provides the ability to search the full text of all documents, browse journal articles by public health subject, and explore the curated collections of over 10,000 publications. Articles stored and shared through CDC Stacks will help CDC to further its mission to save lives and protect the health of citizens of the U.S. and of international populations.

You can explore CDC stacks at <http://stacks.cdc.gov> . Check back often for new articles!

CONGRATULATIONS

We proudly announce that **Sandra Sazdovska** (Macedonia, 2011/12, sandra.sazdovska@mail.huji.ac.il) has been awarded the 2013 Hebrew University Faculty of Medicine Prize for an outstanding Master's degree. The subject of the thesis is "Parent-of-Origin Effects on Birth Weight". Her tutors were Prof. Yechiel Friedlander and Dr. Hagit Hochner.

Vinita Sharma (Nepal, 2010/11, vinita.sharma.luitel@gmail.com) and **Miguel Reina** (Ecuador 2010/11) have had their article published in *Health and the Environment Journal* (Volume 3, No. 3, 2012)

We are proud to announce that **Dr. Gerald Etapelong Sume** (Cameroon 2006/7, pampampascal@yahoo.com) has been appointed to the post of National Program Officer for the Expanded Program on Immunization in Cameroon of the WHO. He began his new function at the beginning of May and we wish him much success.

Our warm good wishes to **Yetunde Afolabi** (Nigeria, 2009/10, yetundeafolabi@yahoo.com) on the birth of her son David.

OUR GRADUATES WRITE

Samita Giri (Nepal, 2011/12, samita.giri2009@gmail.com)

Greetings from Dhulikhel Hospital, Nepal. Just to let you know that I had the chance to meet a team from the Pears Foundation at the Ambassador's house in Nepal. It was a great meeting and we had a very delicious Israeli dinner. It was a great honor to see the Pears team in Nepal. I will be very happy to work with Tevel in Nepal with whom the Pears Foundation is planning to work.



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