



Braun School of Public Health
and Community Medicine
Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Hadassah Medical Organization



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

March 2016



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A Note from Prof. Ora Paltiel – Director of the Braun School

Dear Alumni,

Recently we had the great honor and privilege of attending our West African IMPH alumni conference in Ile Ife Nigeria. This was one of my last acts and tasks as IMPH director. It was a moving and gratifying experience to re-meet our alumni, hear about their work and see some of them on their home territory. As I move on to take on the role of Director of the Braun School I want to reiterate to each and every one of you how privileged I have felt to direct the IMPH program, how satisfying and significant these last three years have been for me, how proud I am of your accomplishments and how important it is to me that we remain in touch over the years and around the globe. I would like to share with you the greetings I gave at the impressive opening ceremony of our alumni conference and share my heartfelt gratitude with our generous hosts for this memorable meeting.



Greetings from Ora Paltiel Ile Ife Feb 8, 2016

“**Prof Adesegun Fatusi**, Provost of the College of Health Sciences, IMPH alumnus and esteemed host

Prof Bamitale Omole Vice Chancellor, Obafemi Awolowo University and Chief Host, represented by Prof. Omolayo Ademola Ajayi

Prof Adetokunbo Lucas, legendary contributor to Public Health in Nigeria and in the world

His Excellency Ambassador **Uriel Palti**, Israel’s ambassador to Nigeria

Prof. **Isaac Folorunso Adewole**, Minister of Health of Nigeria, represented by Dr. Babatunde Ipaye

Guests, students and finally, IMPH family.

Shalom and Greetings from the holy city of Jerusalem, the city of light, of truth from many angles, city of conflict that strives for peace!

Standing in front of you in the beautiful city of Ile-Ife (*Ife*- whose spelling in Hebrew means beautiful), in Obafemi Awolowo University (NUMBER ONE university in Nigeria!) I am humbled and awed. In my professional life, the struggles I have had to overcome have been minor compared to many encountered by you. Although all academics and many physicians complain of lack of basic resources infrastructure and support we know that everything is relative and some systems are privileged while others are not. However, even seemingly privileged places have grown up out of struggle. I grew up in Canada, where health for all was an ideology since 1964. It was forged out of political will despite vehement and sometimes virulent protest from the doctors. I remember my parents paying their last bill at the doctor's office when I was 7 years old and then never again. Across the lifespan, being a citizen or permanent resident was the only requirement for obtaining preventive, curative, perinatal, rehabilitative or palliative care. This, in a country at peace, where mutuality and social safety nets were part of the common ethos, and where to this day, universal health coverage is the most popular government program and almost a defining feature of Canadian society.

Moving to Israel in 1992, I encountered a health system less endowed financially but equally committed to equity, quality and universal access. I have witnessed primary care coverage improving by leaps and bounds, universal electronic medical records for every outpatient encounter, a national quality indicators program which our school has the honor of heading, improved disease registries, improved quality of care, plummeting mortality from cardiovascular diseases, life expectancy among the highest and maternal and infant mortality among the lowest in the world. This, in a country which has not known one day of peace since its founding.

Theodor Herzl the founder of Zionism and the visionary of the state of Israel said-"If you will it, it is not a dream (or legend)". There is no doubt that that will turned health in Israel into a reality



that we can celebrate. Not only celebrate, but also share with the world, and through the wisdom and perspicacity of the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs and MASHAV the IMPH has been able to share this dream with the world for more than 40 years, with over 800 students from 90 countries around the globe. The vision and the fruition of this dream is also what our students witness when they sojourn with us for the one year IMPH. Back home, we know that you all strive to improve the health and wellbeing of your communities and that you face many more challenges than I could ever imagine.

The IMPH alumni program, so generously funded by the **Pears Foundation**, allows us to throw you back in the water with a lifeline, and these alumni meetings are like a lifeboat. The Braun School is committed to keeping the dreams of health for all afloat among our alumni and to help translate these dreams to reality by facilitating tangible support, especially via peers. I am honored to be standing here in the presence of esteemed scholars and leaders of the health system in West Africa, people who have done so much up to now to improve health in this region. I am so looking forward to hearing you and learning from you. Your presence here attests to the importance placed on public health, to the stature and high regard extended to our host, Prof. Fatusi, to the appreciation of Israel and its people, and to the special place the IMPH and the Braun School has in your hearts.

I would also like to thank Dr. Maureen Malowany for endless hours of work in meticulous planning this conference, to Tomi Adepoju for attending to countless details, to Prof. Yehuda Neumark for his inspiration, leadership, and devotion to the School and to the IMPH program. And finally to all of you, our dear IMPH alumni for making the time, for making this a priority in your busy lives, and for acknowledging the role of the Braun School IMPH in your lives. We are going to have a wonderful three days together. We will take on the challenge of the double burden of communicable and non-communicable disease. We will listen and learn from one another and I am sure we will all be enriched by the experience.

May god bless you all for being here. Shalom.



A Note from Prof. Yehuda Neumark— the IMPH Director

Dear IMPH Alumni,

Three and a half years ago I assumed the position of director of the Braun School and turned the IMPH Program over to Professor Ora Paltiel. During this entire time, I have kept up with all that happened in the Program and with the IMPH Alumni activities. Under Ora's brilliant leadership the IMPH program has flourished and personally and on behalf of our students and alumni I thank her for all her hard work and praise her on all her successes, which will no doubt now continue on the broader School level.

As you know, my involvement in, and passion for the IMPH program goes back many years. So, although my main reason for stepping down from directorship of the School was to allow myself more time for research, family and contemplating the universe (not necessarily in that order), I was unable to turn down the invitation to return to the IMPH program in an administrative position. I enthusiastically look forward to working with the fabulous IMPH team – Pam, Edna,



Maureen, Reut, Lior and Ronit in moving the program forward.

Ora, Maureen and I recently returned from Nigeria where we had the chance to hear first-hand from our graduates about the tremendous contributions they are making to the health and development of the communities they serve. I firmly believe that that, through you Dear Alumni, our humble efforts here in Jerusalem are improving the plight of millions of people in Africa and the world over.

The public health challenges that face you are many and complex, whether they are "natural" disasters such as the deadly cyclone that ravaged Fiji last week, or those resulting directly from the

actions and behaviors of people such as increased vulnerability to sexual abuse and exploitation stemming from rapid urbanization. At the same time, our arsenal of evidence-based interventions is expanding, and with it our ability to reach larger and even remote target populations. For example, the smartphone app "Gyan Jyoti" ("light of knowledge") containing motivational videos was recently shown to help married rural women in India better understand contraceptive choices which led to a dramatic increase in the number of women using modern family planning methods.

We will continue working to keep the IMPH curriculum relevant and I invite you to share with me any skills and knowledge gaps that, given your post-IMPH experience, you identified in the IMPH program.

We are fully aware of the increased global competition for excellent MPH candidates as a growing number of universities offer scholarship support for international students, but we remain convinced that the richness of the IMPH experience in terms of quality academic-professional training and stimulating social-cultural interactions can be matched by few. As we continue to work tirelessly to identify sources of scholarship funding, **I ask each of you to identify high-caliber IMPH candidates for immediate ([online](#)) application for the 2016-2017 IMPH course.**

I am very excited to begin the next leg of the IMPH journey and am delighted to be making that journey with you dear Alumni!

Good Cheer!

Yehuda



A Note from Dr. Maureen Malowany—IMPH Alumni Academic Coordinator

Dear Alumni,

We have just begun the Second Semester of this academic year. You all remember this transition, I am sure. Your days of all students in every class move into some students in some classes and the wonderful beginning of COPC!

As Yehuda and Ora have mentioned, we returned from our IMPH



West Africa Alumni Regional Conference, held at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, full of pride in the work our alumni have taken forward since graduation. We are especially grateful to our Nigerian hosts at OAU – Prof. Adesegun Fatusi (IMPH 1995), Provost, College of Health Sciences – and his amazing team of faculty, students and staff – who made us feel most welcome in their ‘home’ as part of their ‘family’. We extend a special thank you to Tomi Adepoju (IMPH 2014), together with her team, for her tireless organisational work! Our senior alumnus, Prof. Femi Soyinka (IMPH 1973), chaired a panel session for which alumnus Dr. Bayo Fatunmbi (IMPH 1998) prepared a critical position paper/presentation for the panelists. The theme of the conference was “Health Systems: Transitioning from Infectious Diseases to Non-Communicable Diseases” and we hope to take this further in geographical scope for the 2017 Jerusalem Conference.

For now, our primary concern is admissions for 2016. We need your input, suggestions, recommendations – you are our ambassadors in the world. Help us strengthen the IMPH program through our students and graduates. The online registration link is: <https://grs.ekmd.huji.ac.il/Pages/> Our IMPH brochure can be found on our website (go to Registration) at <http://IMPH.HUJI.AC.IL>.

We have condolences for some and prayers for renewed health for others of our alumni as Reut has noted in this newsletter.

Dr. Grace Apiyo (IMPH 2012) arrived this week to begin her PhD program!! It is wonderful to have her back.

To all of you, warmest regards,

Maureen

Maureen Malowany, PhD, MHIth Sc, MA
IMPH Alumni Academic Coordinator

IMPH Alumni West Africa Regional Meeting - February 2016—Alumni's Note

Rilwan Raji (Nigeria, 2012/2013, laoluraji@gmail.com) writes:

I feel personally grateful to the Pears Foundation for making the IMPH Alumni re-union a possibility as I had to return to my alma-mata, the Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife town (the cradle of civilization in Yoruba land) after 9 years from my graduation as a medical doctor from the School. Considering the location of my school in the South West of the Country, and my public health practice in the far north of the Country, only such a conference could have availed me such an opportunity to re-unite with my teachers and professional colleagues who had hitherto requested my visit long time before now to share my experience of public health practice in difficult and challenging terrains as is the case with the current insecurity in the northern part of the Country with Boko Haram terrorists.

To the Braun School of Public Health and Community Medicine, I say Toda Raba, because the alumni conference gave me an opportunity to meet and interact with former graduates, many of whom I had read about and hoped to meet and exchange ideas. This wish became a reality! Furthermore, seeing and listening to Yehuda, Ora, & Maureen again after almost 3 years relived my memories of my amazing time in Israel, especially their tutelage, mentorship and commitment, empowering us to continue to give back to our communities.

I am also glad that graduates had opportunities to share their public health practice and learn from one another; giving us the hope that sub-Saharan Africa can only get better with such great minds on display especially as we transit from the burden of infectious diseases to non-communicable diseases. In fact we have gone one step further with the conference giving us a much better opportunity to reconnect with each other through the Whatsapp group, accommodating other alumni who couldn't make it to the conference.

I must also thank His Excellency, the Israeli Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr. Uri Palti for gracing the occasion and further demonstrating the excellent ties between Nigeria and Israel. Lest I forget, special gratitude to Dr. Maureen Malowany; the awesome event master planner who made the entire event flawless, Tomi Adepoju (IMPH 2014) and her amazing team on the ground in Ile-Ife; who made our trip from the airport to the conference and back seamless including the cultural tours & dinner, Prof. Segun Fatusi (IMPH 1995); who practically brought everyone that mattered in the Nigeria's health system (including Nigeria's Honorable Minister for Health) to the event, & Dr. Segun Afolabi (IMPH 2005) for all his tireless efforts throughout the event.



Theodore Herzl (Ted) Tulchinsky MD, MPH
retires from the Braun School

Prof. Tulchinsky has recently celebrated his 80th birthday, and his very last class teaching, before retirement. We have asked Prof. Tulchinsky to write a few words about his career in Public Health in order to mark these occasions.

I was born in Brantford Ontario 1936; married (Joan) 52 years ago and have 3 children and 7 grandchildren. I received a MD degree from the University of Toronto in 1961, and a MPH from Yale in 1968.

My public health career of over 50 years started in Canada as a family physician and later as Deputy Minister of Health in Manitoba. After immigrating to Israel in 1976, I joined the Ministry of Health as head of public health and then Coordinator of Health in the West Bank and Gaza (1980-1994). I worked on water quality introducing mandatory chlorination, the immunization system, Rift Valley Fever, occupational health and nutrition. I also worked on growth studies of children, leading to the Palestinian Authority mandating micronutrient fortification of flour.

I have taught at the Braun School of Public Health International MPH program since 1982 and continue to the present time. I have found this stimulating and I learned much from the interchange with students from around the world including publishing articles with graduates.

I have published 139 articles in peer reviewed journals and book chapters on a wide range of public health topics including infectious disease policies, nutrition policies, maternal and child health, mesothelioma, geriatric care, thalassemia, community health workers, public health ethics and development of public health education.

In the 1990s I was a consultant to the World Bank and later the Open Society Institute in many schools of public health across Russia as well as in Central Europe (Macedonia, Moldova, Albania and Georgia), and in Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Mongolia).



With a Russian colleague, in 2009 I published *The New Public Health* a textbook meant for Russian schools but later published in English in three editions and used widely in Israel, in Europe and North America. It has been published in other languages (Uzbek, Bulgarian, Romanian, Macedonian, Mongolian, Albanian and Georgian).

During the period of 2004 - 2008, I served on the Executive Board of the Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER). I was chair of the Ethics and Undergraduate Education Working Groups of ASPHER and assisted in development of the Agency for Public Health Education Accreditation (APHEA). I also worked on the Israeli Ministry of Health "Healthy Israel 2020" section on nutrition.

Since 2010, I have served as Deputy Editor of *Public Health Reviews* and am currently head of a school of health professions including a BA program in public health at Ashkelon College, a first in Israel. I am currently writing a *Casebook of Public Health* to be published by Elsevier Press in 2016.

Honoring Prof. Ted Tulchinsky

Save the Date!

As you are making the arrangements to attend the 6th International Jerusalem Conference on Health Policy in May, we would kindly ask you to make sure you are here the evening of Wednesday May 25th (right after the conference) in order to honor our Dear Prof. Ted Tulchinsky on the occasion of his 80th birthday and retirement from teaching in the Braun School.

New Faculty Members

The sustainability of any academic institute can only be secured through the recruitment of young researchers/teachers who lead the way forward across the years. Last year, the Braun School was very fortunate to recruit highly gifted researchers: Dr. Shai Carmi and Dr. Raanan Raz. We asked them to introduce themselves to our Alumni:

Dr. Shai Carmi:

I am a senior lecturer, since the summer of 2015, at the Braun School of Public Health and Community Medicine of the Hebrew University and Hadassah. I work in statistical and population genetics, fascinating fields that combine state of the art biology, medicine, statistics, and computer science. The ultimate goal of my lab is to develop and apply methods for the extraction of epidemiological, biological, and historical information from human genetic variation data, in particular from the Jewish and general Israeli population. We have a number of exciting projects involving international collaborations and advanced computational techniques. Specifically, we are members of The Ashkenazi Genome Consortium, a large international col-



laboration for the mapping of the DNA of Ashkenazi Jews. Our recent work, which was widely covered by the media, has demonstrated the utility of our newly generated data for medical genetics studies in Ashkenazi population, as well as for the reconstruction of historical events (for example, a dramatic reduction in the Ashkenazi population size in late medieval times). Other ongoing projects include studying the evolution of pathogenic mutations and technologies for preconception, preimplantation, and prenatal genetic testing.

Before arriving to the Hebrew University, I was a post-doctoral researcher at Columbia University (2011-2015), supported by a fellowship from the Human Frontier Science Program. I also completed a short post-doctoral training at Bar-Ilan University in Israel (2010-2011), working on RNA processing in the sleeping sickness agent *Trypanosoma brucei* and RNA and DNA editing in humans. Before that, I obtained my PhD in statistical physics, again at Bar-Ilan, during which I developed the theory of anomalous diffusion and transport processes in model networks. Through my Ph.D. work I was granted the national Wolf Fund award and the Adams Fellowship of the Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

Dr. Raanan Raz:

I am an epidemiologist with a background in computer science and a PhD in neuroscience. The goal of my work is to understand links between environmental exposures and brain development. Most of my current research is about environmental risk factors for autism spectrum disorder (ASD), with a special focus on air pollution. ASD is a serious developmental disorder with increasing public health implications. In recent years it has become clear that ASD is more prevalent than previously believed, and that both genetics and environmental agents are implicated in its etiology. However, the identity of these agents, the magnitude of their effects, their mechanisms of action and their interaction with susceptibility genes is yet to be revealed. Such discoveries may prevent some of the future autism cases through reduced exposure, by focused environmental regulations and modified behaviors during critical exposure periods. I also study environmental factors of neonatal thyroid hormones and the role of these hormones in brain development and ASD.

**Highlighting a Graduate: Narmada Acharya, Nepal, 1997/1998**

Following the completion of the IMPH course, Dr. Acharya resumed her job in Care Nepal with full confidence, enthusiasm and renewed energy to make meaningful changes in the lives of people. Recognizing her prior experience, demonstrated leadership and management skills, she was assigned as a manager in an integrated program, including health. Here, she successfully led the building of maternity rooms in seven health facilities. In the absence of a delivery room, women were compelled to deliver their babies at home risking their own lives and their new-born babies. Once available, more than 90% of the pregnant women in that area used the facilities resulting in a dramatic reduction in neonatal deaths and post-partum infections. This was her first achievement within one year of completion of the IMPH program.

Dr. Acharya moved to UNICEF in Nepal as Program Officer for Health, Nutrition and Communication in 1999. She was successful in developing appropriate policies and strategies to reach out to women and children living in remote areas through developing accountability in the local government mechanism. Within one year's time, she was promoted to Regional Program Officer at the

UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia. In this position, she developed integrated management, rights and technology guidelines on emergency obstetric care and promoted community engagement in seven countries in the region. Her contribution was acknowledged by being offered an international position to establish and manage a UNICEF field office in Afghanistan. In this assignment, Dr. Acharya recruited and trained staff and developed maternal and child health capacities among local health personnel in this challenging post-conflict situation.

Immediately after returning from Afghanistan, the UN International Labour Organization (ILO) office in Nepal offered her a National Program Coordinator Position to lead the four year HIV workplace program. She enjoyed working with private sector leaders and advocating for protecting workers' rights. Within a year, the project was regarded as one of the most advanced among the 15 countries participating in the project. Dr. Acharya contributed immensely to a review of national laws, policies and strategies, and she mobilized resources to ensure access to services for trade union members. From there, she moved to UNAIDS Nepal as a Policy, Advocacy and Social Mobilization Adviser in 2005, and in 2010, as a result of her demonstrated high performance in the HIV national response in Nepal, she was presented with the opportunity to contribute more broadly to the global HIV sector and was posted to Cambodia in 2010 as a Policy, Social Mobilization and Advocacy Adviser. Here, she was credited in achieving ground-breaking results in the areas



of developing strategies and tools for HIV response, capacity-building of government and civil society, legal and policy reform and improving health and legal services to target populations.

Currently, Dr. Acharya works as UNAIDS Strategic Interventions Adviser in Zambia in sub-Saharan Africa. UNAIDS leads the HIV epidemic response globally and facilitates the United Nations Member states in fulfilling the political commitments in responding to HIV/AIDS. In 2015, UNAIDS issued a number of global targets, guidelines and strategies aiming at ending AIDS by 2030 as a public health threat. As a team member of the UNAIDS Country Office, Dr. Acharya plays a vital role in developing national strategies and policies and ensuring that they are adopted to plan and implement effective and interventions with adequate resources. She also provides capacity-building measures and technical assistance to government and civil society stakeholders on adopting new UNAIDS strategies and guidelines in meeting the 90-90-90 target (90 percent of people living with HIV get tested, 90 percent of the people diagnosed positive have access to treatment, and 90 percent on treatment are virally suppressed) by 2020.

Congratulations

Congratulations to Dr. Sergey Zhivin (Russia, 2010/2011) upon completing his PhD! Sergey writes: "I am pleased to announce that on November 30th, 2015 I successfully defended my PhD entitled "Epidemiological study of workers employed in the French nuclear fuel industry and analysis of the health effects of uranium compounds according to their solubility" supervised by Dr. Dominique Laurier at the Institut de Radioprotection et de Sûreté Nucléaire (IRSN, Fontenay-aux-Roses, France). PhD research motivation: The magnitude of health risks is the major question of current radiation research when exposures are of low-level and delivered in a protracted manner. Moreover, risks associated with intakes of radionuclides are of significant societal and scientific concern because of the potential for nuclear materials releases, nuclear accidents, and terrorist attacks. Nuclear fuel cycle workers constitute one of the most appropriate populations for this research because of their long-term exposure to various uranium compounds and availability of monitoring data.

Congratulations to Comfort Suku (Nigeria, 2007/2008) upon the birth of a baby girl in November. About the baby's name Yana Comfort writes: "You may recognize it as a name with Hebrew origin (I am taking my Israel connection very seriously)".

On behalf of the entire IMPH family we would like to wish Comfort and her family a lifetime of good health and happiness with Yana!

Condolences

We were deeply saddened by the news of Dr. Louis Okio Talamoi, the father of Emmanuel Otto Omony (Uganda, 2008/2009, em.otto@yahoo.co.uk) and Sarah Achen (Uganda, 2011/2012, achen.sarah@yahoo.com) on the 31st December 2015, at Apollo hospital, new Delhi, India..

On behalf of the entire IMPH family, we send you our most sincere condolences. Our thoughts are with you and your family.

May the love of family and friends comfort you during these difficult days.

