



Hebrew University-Hadassah

Braun School of Public Health & Community Medicine

International MPH Alumni Newsletter

November 2017



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Greetings from Prof. Ora Paltiel - Braun School Director

Dear Braun Family,

A new Jewish Year is upon us and we humans find ourselves facing the challenges of disasters, natural and man-made, violence and displacement at unheard levels, apart from the personal, family, local and national challenges which all of us encounter daily. We have just graduated our 42nd class of IMPH graduates, ready and willing to take on these and other local issues of their countries. Allow me to quote from my speech to them at the recent graduation:



‘To our graduates: You have participated in Israel’s best kept secret, the IMPH program. It is certainly one of the most beautiful and meaningful activities which take place on this campus and perhaps in the whole of the University and the country. It is the embodiment of Herzl’s vision, of Ben Gurion’s hopes and personally of my own idealism and my desire, as well as that of our entire faculty, to share knowledge and to bring our students to a higher realm. So now that you have reached this higher ground it is my job to send you off, with a wish and a prayer and few words of wisdom.

My wish is that you be conscientious in overcoming barriers to public health in your countries, cognizant of the problems that exist and are about to occur, competent to assess their causes, comfortable to pull up your sleeves and committed to work hard to resolve them, creative in coming up with solutions, and confident that you can make a difference.

My prayer is that peace will reign in your countries so that you can devote all of your energies to these tasks and to enjoying your families, your friends, and the beauty of nature around you without fear or conflict.

And finally, a few words of wisdom – from my nephew, Josh. Josh says, **“The way you do anything is the way you do everything”**. It won’t always be perfect but it should be your best. Do your best to bring health opportunities to all, since without health how can men, women and children accomplish anything? For when you do your best, whether in clinical work, in organizations, in determining policy or in teaching and research I am sure that fewer children will

go to bed ill or hungry or orphaned, fewer mothers will anguish about the wellbeing of their children, and fewer fathers will mourn. In short, fewer will suffer. Challenge yourselves to leave no one behind, to address inequalities, injustice and corruption- it will pay off.

And while doing your best out there don't forget to stay part of the global and expanding IMPH family. We have Josephine Ojiambo as a role model, a doer, a model of excellence and someone who has stayed connected and committed.

You have already earned our pride, but we do expect this pride to grow and grow and grow, as you will, facing the challenges ahead. To quote Helen Keller: ***"Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all."***

It has been a pleasure and a humbling experience to know you, to teach you and to welcome you to my home. -סעו לשלום- go in peace."

Ora



Greetings from Prof. Yehuda Neumark— IMPH Director

Dear IMPH Alumni,

We had the honor and pleasure of having Sir Trevor and Lady Daniela Pears be with us here in Jerusalem for the graduation ceremony of the 42nd IMPH class in September. During their visit, Hebrew University recognized Pears Foundation's generous support by inscribing Pears Foundation on the Wall of Benefactors.

During the very moving dedication ceremony on Mount Scopus, IMPHer Dr. Sharon Kataka from Kenya spoke on behalf of all past, present and future Pears scholars at Hebrew University. In her heartfelt words of appreciation, Sharon noted that *"Through the Pears Foundation Scholarship Program, we return home as well-rounded human beings. We return home with a heavily-laden professional toolbox. The knowledge and skills that we have gained here in Israel during our*

studies at Hebrew University will put us on a pedestal, from upon which, we will be able to positively influence the development of our societies; both in our own home countries and in the broader international arena. We return home from this enriching experience, having grown socially and culturally, having benefitted so profoundly from the diversity of our colleagues from our own programs and from the other programs. And we return home with a deeper understanding and appreciation for this wonderful country – with all her complex challenges, all her historical richness, and all her beauty... We pray that the Almighty continues to bless you and your family, as you have been and continue to be a great contributor to this noble cause, which has positively touched the lives of so many in different disciplines across the globe. And we pray for peace here in Israel and throughout the world."



I too had the privilege and honor to say a few words about the impact Pears Foundation has made on the IMPH Program and on public health globally. Here is what I said:



Photo taken by Bruno Charbit

In the Talmud, our sages compiled a list of commandments which "have no measure" or are limitless, and another list of commandments whose fruits are enjoyed in the short-term and the principle is sustained into the future. There are only two items which appear on both lists – acts of kindness such as amelioration of societal needs, and the pursuit of knowledge. Trevor & Daniela, with your generous Chesed - benevolence, and our academic IMPH program, the Pears Foundation–Braun School–Hebrew University partnership, is the ultimate expression of the linking of these lists.

Just two weeks ago, we had yet another opportunity to enjoy the fruits of our efforts, and to witness the sustained impact that the IMPH program continues to make in the world. We received a call for proposals to undertake research that will lead to more effective public health Interventions in humanitarian-crisis settings. The funders stipulated that the research be undertaken as a collaborative project between an academic institution and relief agencies. So naturally, we reached out to our IMPH alumni and our current students, hoping to find potential partners who are working in this area. And we had one week within which to develop and submit

the proposal.

We were astounded by the immediate response from tens of alumni across the globe, who are working in relief agencies, often in senior positions, offering aid to literally millions of displaced persons and refugees in war-torn countries in Africa, in post-earthquake communities in Nepal and Italy, and in typhoon-ravaged Philippines. Within 48 hours, our alumni and students shared with us highly-articulated ideas for important research, based on their own ongoing real-world experiences. They secured commitment from their respective agencies to collaborate with us on this proposed project. They connected us with their broad global network of partners in the field and in academia. And, they expressed a heartfelt and heartwarming desire to partner with us, with Hebrew University, and with Israel; now, not as students, but as peers and professional colleagues. Thanks to the outpouring of responses from our alumni and current IMPH students, we submitted a proposal that, if funded, has the potential to significantly improve the lives of millions of pregnant women and their babies, in acute and protracted humanitarian crisis settings the world over.

Since 2004, Pears Foundation has awarded scholarships to more than 80 IMPH students from 18 countries, who have studied at the Hebrew University's Braun School of Public Health, and who have gone on to make a real difference in the world. In addition, the Pears IMPH Alumni Program allows us to maintain communication with our graduates, offer lifelong-education opportunities, and engage with them to advance public health science and practice. What we have accomplished together over the past nearly 15 years, is simply



amazing! And I say "together", because it is only through the mutual trust and appreciation that we have for one another, that has allowed the IMPH program to thrive, and continue providing the quality training and education that you, our students, our graduates, and the University, expect from us. So, personally, and on behalf of Professor Ora Paltiel, the Braun School Director, and the staff and teachers of the IMPH program, please accept our sincerest wishes of congratulations on this momentous occasion of being formally recognized by Hebrew University,

for your contribution to making this world a better place for all of us. Mazal Tov!!

I share this with you, dear colleagues, because this is the 2nd time in the past few months that we have reached out to you to partner with us in a joint initiative (in March, Ora invited those of you involved in environmental/occupational epidemiology research to suggest local applications for a metabolomics facility in our faculty), and both times we were truly inspired by the number of responses and indications of interest to collaborate with us and with each other, and by the truly impressive field work and research that so many of you are engaged in.

This served to remind us, and Trevor and the president of HU, just what a remarkable and powerful global public health force our IMPH Alumni network is!!

Yes, the Pears IMPH Alumni Program allows us to engage with you to advance public health science and practice, but we need to do more, and can do more, to leverage your combined knowledge, skills, motivation and influence, for the global public good.

In the coming months, I will be working with Reut and Maureen and with you, dear graduates, to map your areas of interest, activity and expertise, and we will actively seek out opportunities for regional and global collaboration on specific topics and on cross-cutting issues. I very much welcome your suggestions and ideas as we move forward.

Looking forward, we were successful in securing additional IMPH scholarships for the current IMPH course, and we will continue our efforts to increase the number of scholarships in the coming years. As always, we need your help to ensure that these scholarships get awarded to the most worthy candidates. [Registration for the 2018-2019 IMPH course will is now open](#), and we will close registration much earlier than in past years, so as to prevent losing excellent candidates who opt to study elsewhere while waiting to hear from us. Please continue to identify potential IMPH students, to ignite their passion to study in Jerusalem and assist them in the application process. While we can't accept everyone, we do try to give preference to those applicants who come with a strong recommendation from you.

Good Cheer and Warmest Regards,

Yehuda



Registration for our IMPH program 2018-2019 is now open!

[Click here for registration.](#)

Message from Dr. Maureen Malowany—IMPH Alumni Academic Coordinator

Dear Alumni,

Hard to believe we are in a new year – for alumni and students. To our recent graduates, welcome to the IMPH Alumni family. Just one year ago you were sitting in Classroom 18, learning about Jerusalem and Israel, and mostly, learning about, with and from each other. We had very special guests at this year's graduation – Sir Trevor and Daniela Pears. All of us were treated to Dr. Josephine Ojiambo's (IMPH 1989) Keynote Lecture. Josephine's short biography and her speech are posted in this issue.

We want this HUJI platform to be of use to you – to be a place for alumni to share information and experiences. One alumnus has asked to set up a group for doctoral students – coming soon. Do you have any other suggestions for groups? Please pass them on to me so that we can keep this platform as a great place to post and share ideas.



We are currently planning the program for an IMPH Alumni East Africa Regional Conference to be held in northwest Tanzania – near Moshi/Arusha – from the 5-8 March 2018. The theme will be “Adolescent Health: Challenges & Opportunities” as you have read in the recent email sent to you all on this platform. We realise that trying to keep up with your many professional activities and career changes is a challenge. Please do help us out on that score!!

As we have just completed our New Year holidays, I wish you and your families a very healthy, creative, challenging and rewarding New Year.

Warm regards,

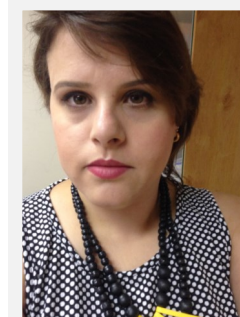
Maureen

IMPH Alumni Academic Coordinator

Message from Ms. Reut Kramer—Alumni Communications Coordinator

Dear Alumni,

Graduation events this year were exceptionally festive. We had all the traditional events and then some more. We had the privilege of hosting Sir Trevor Pears and Lady Daniela Pears from Pears Foundation at these events, and our distinguished Alumna, Dr. Josephine Ojiambo. And then it all ends, and yet another cohort of Graduates is off to make our world better.



We have just said goodbye, and then welcomed the new class of 2017/2018. We all wish them a fruitful and successful year here with us!

We are now starting to use the new feature on the Alumni Social Platform: Groups. We will open localized Alumni Groups and some groups of main interest. You are all welcome to join the relevant groups and contribute to the discussion and knowledge distribution!

Best regards,

Reut



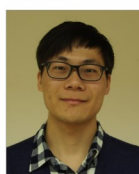
INTERNATIONAL MPH CLASS 2017-2018



ANIKE MATHEW-ANTONY
ANTIGUA & BARBUDA



MOHAMADU WIRNGO
CAMEROON



SIYU ZHANG
CHINA



LUZ TORRES
COLOMBIA



NAOMI ASSEGIED
ETHIOPIA



VENIANA KALOUGIVAKI
FIJI



MBEMBA DRAMMEH
GAMBIA



DESMOND NICHOLSON
GUYANA



KARRY FELIX
HAITI



MRIDULA BHARGAVA
INDIA



KARAMCHAND PATIL
INDIA



AYA ZUAITER
ISRAEL



BANGAMAN AKANI
IVORY COAST



MELCHIZEDEK MOKAYA
KENYA



ROSEMARY ELENDU
NIGERIA



MARIJA MILIC
SERBIA



JANE MAGANGA
TANZANIA



JOSEPH TAKAI
TONGA



KIMTON OPIYO
UGANDA



ANTONINA DOROKHINA
UKRAINE



JORDAN HANNINK
USA



KATHERINE BLEIBERG
USA

Graduation 2016/2017 Events

Pears Foundation @ Wall of Benefactors

In recognition of Pears Foundation exceptional support, Hebrew University, Jerusalem inscribed the Pears Foundation on the Wall of Benefactors at a ceremony, 10th September, Mt. Scopus campus. Prof. Menachem Ben-Sasson, Chancellor, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Ambassador Yossi Gal, the Vice President for Advancement and External Relations at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem extended the University's thanks to the Pears Foundation in the presence of Sir Trevor and Daniela Pears. Sir Trevor, warmly addressed those gathered including Pears Scholars from International MPH, Glocal International Development Program and International Masters Program at the International School of Agricultural Sciences.



Photos taken by Bruno Charbit



Graduation Day—September 11th, 2017

Ambassadors Reception

Prior to the Graduation Ceremony, the Braun School held an Ambassadors Reception in honor of our keynote speaker, Dr. Josephine Ojiambo (Kenya, IMPH 1988/1989) and our distinguished guests and donors, Sir Trevor Pears and Lady Daniela Pears.

We were honored by the attendance of the Ambassadors and members of the diplomatic corps. Many of them attended also the Graduation Ceremony that followed.



Graduation

On September 11th, 2017, after the Ambassadors Meeting, it was finally time to celebrate our 42nd Graduation Ceremony.

The 2016/2017 cohort consists of 21 Graduates from 17 different countries. Most of them attended the ceremony in their national costumes, as Graduates traditionally do in the International MPH Graduation Ceremonies.

The Ceremony began with greetings from Prof. Menachem Ben-Sasson, Chancellor, Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Prof. David Lichtstein, Dean, Faculty of Medicine, Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Prof. Yoram Weiss, Director, Hadassah Ein Kerem Hospital; H.E. Ambassador Gil Haskel, Head of MASHAV, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; H.E. Ambassador Alexander De La Rosa Garabito, Ambassador of the Dominican Republic.



Following the greeting and the Graduates' song: "Peace will come upon us", we had the privilege of hearing our keynote speaker, Dr. Josephine Ojiambo (Kenya, IMPH 1988/1989, Deputy Secretary-General, Commonwealth Secretariat; Former Chief of Executive Board, United Nations Population Fund and Deputy Permanent Representative, Kenyan Mission to the United Nations) as she gave her spectacular speech. She shared her experiences post-graduation in six lessons for our Graduates:



Lesson 1: Travel far, but remember the path home

Lesson 2: Make use of your tools wisely

Lesson 3: Never be too proud to receive help

Lesson 4: Let your work become your passion

Lesson 5: Learn what it means to be 'fruitful'

Lesson 6: Embrace contradictions

Class representatives, Dr. Fon Edwin Atunji (Cameroon) and Dr. Smita Todkar (India) addressed their classmates. They expressed also, on behalf of their colleagues, their gratitude to the IMPH Faculty and Administrative Staff and to our generous donors.



Prof. Ora Paltiel, Director, Braun School of Public Health and Community Medicine, delivered her closing remarks which concluded the event. A reception was held after the ceremony in honor of our Graduates.



Highlighting an Alumna—Dr. Josephine Ojiambo (Kenya, 1988/1989)

Since her graduation, Dr. Josephine Ojiambo has gone ‘from strength to strength’. Dr. Ojiambo has served her country as **Kenya’s Ambassador/ Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations**.

She also served as **Chief of the Executive Board and External Relations Branch at the United Nations**

Population Fund (UNFPA) embracing their mission of “Delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every child- birth is safe and every young person’s potential is fulfilled.”

Dr. Ojiambo currently holds the prestigious appointment as **Deputy Secretary-General (Political) at the Commonwealth Secretariat**, overseeing the political, human rights, rule of law, and communications work of the Secretariat. The Commonwealth Secretariat provides guidance to its 53 member countries on policy making, technical assistance and advisory services with a mission to support governments to achieve sustainable, inclusive and equitable development.

In all these capacities, Dr. Ojiambo, engaged with world leaders and committees on themes including international peace and security development, humanitarian aid, and South-South cooperation.

With her leadership qualities, vast experience and extraordinary range of skills – from research methodology and epidemiology to international public health and community development, and policy advocacy, planning and programming, Dr. Ojiambo has been a vital asset to Kenya and far beyond. She has played leading roles in women’s organizations, UNICEF and public health NGOs. Dr. Ojiambo is an active member of the Women’s Democracy Network, the Medical Women International Association, and the Pan African Women’s Organization, among others. Dr. Ojiambo is a proud life member of the Nassau County Chapter of the Hadassah Women’s Organization and, in all of her capacities, a tireless advocate for Israel.



Alumni News

Ardita Kongjonaj (Albania, 2012/2013) writes to us about a research project in which she recently participated:

"Variations in Infant and Childhood Vitamin D Supplementation Programmes across Europe and Factors influencing Adherence".

The research was led by the University of Birmingham where Prof. Tulchinsky and I were involved as well.

A questionnaire with 20 questions was designed pertaining to the content of vitamin D supplementation policies, practices, infant health care and socioeconomic factors and policy implementation strategies. The questions were based on expert opinion (from pediatric endocrinology and public health) of factors that were perceived to influence adherence to infant vitamin D supplementation.

The questionnaire was sent to members of the European Society of Pediatric Endocrinology (ESPE) Bone and Growth Plate Working Group in May 2014, which included representatives from Turkey, Israel and Russia. Additional effort was made, via various contacts and sources, to reach out to public health professionals and experts in the field in other European countries. Contacts were established with 30 countries and all except Iceland (97%) responded.

The rise in nutritional rickets and low adherence to vitamin D supplementation are major public health concerns. Whilst national supplementation policies are in place across Europe, their implementation has been somewhat neglected. The results of this survey demonstrate that relatively simple implementation strategies are associated with good adherence. Apart from providing information at discharge from NNU and universal supplementation of all babies, independent of the mode of feeding, we specifically recommend mandatory recording of adherence in the personal child health record ('red book', passports) during child health surveillance visits. Providing financial family support also enhanced adherence, suggesting that incentivizing parents can improve child health.

Improving adherence is a multi-task operation and one should adopt as many factors as feasible. Low adherence countries such as the UK should consider adopting successful implementation strategies from other European countries.

We call for more political effort to invest in implementation of efficient supplementation and fortification programmes to prevent symptomatic vitamin D deficiency.



Rajesh Kumar Rai (India, IMPH 2010/2011) and Prof. Ted Tulchinsky published an article in the *Economic and Political Weekly* ([Vol. 52, Issue No. 27, 08 Jul, 2017](#)) under the title “India Badly Needs Public Health Education”.

Click the link to read!



Dr. Chuanning Yu (China, IMPH 2010/2011) was recently awarded a PhD in Epidemiology and Biological Statistics from FuDan University, Shanghai.

Congratulations!



Congratulations to Prof. Vincent Batwala (Uganda, IMPH 1997/1998) for being appointed as Director, Directorate of Research and Graduate Training, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, Uganda.

What a great promotion! We wish you much success in your new position!



Dr. Wen Peng's (China, IMPH 2016/2017) thesis titled "Mediterranean Diet in Israeli Adolescents" (supervised by Prof. Elliot Berry) and Dr. Kanan Desai's (India, 2016/2017) thesis "The Association of Leucocyte Telomere Length Dynamics with Pulmonary Function" (supervised by Prof. Jeremy Kark), were jointly awarded the Faculty of Medicine Prize for Best Thesis!



A belated Mazal-Tov to Sue Annette Ramos-Diaz (USA, IMPH 2013/2014) upon the birth of her daughter Edayia!

An early Mazal-Tov to Tevfik Bayram (Turkey, IMPH 2016/2017) upon his upcoming wedding to Veen Sulaivany . The ceremony will take place on 11/11/2017.

We wish Tavfik and Veen a blissful marriage!

