SUMMER 2012
MIRT NEWS

Multidisciplinary International Research Training (MIRT) Program
Striving to Eliminate Health Disparities

“If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together”—An Aboriginal Australian woman

MEET HSPH MIRT 2012 FELLOWS

“I look forward to being immersed in the culture as well as conducting research on health disparities in an underserved area. I hope to interact with the locals, form friendships with other MIRT fellows and faculty, and make a difference!” —Aline Souza, MIRT 2012 Chile

“I believe that the HSPH MIRT Program will provide me with essential training and experience in conducting population-based research in the communities I hope to serve. I also believe it will help me gain verification in what direction that I would like to take my career.” —Hazar Khidir, MIRT 2012 Ethiopia

“I hope that my fellowship in Peru through the MIRT Program will not only provide hands-on clinical research opportunities, but also a cultural immersion experience that will transform the way I view the world in all areas of life.” —Claudia Martinez, MIRT 2012 Peru
It is with great pleasure that we introduce our HSPH MIRT (MHIRT) 2012 fellows to the MIRT community. The new fellows are excited to begin their life-enriching fellowships and continue the legacy of the MIRT Program in Chile, Ethiopia, and Peru. Hope you enjoy meeting them!

**MEET HSPH MIRT 2012 FELLOWS**

Hello! My name is Samantha Traslavina. I’m currently a sophomore at Columbia University, studying Neuroscience and History. I’ve become interested in women’s health and mental health through working as a peer counselor and advocate at my school’s Rape Crisis Center, as well as teaching sexual assault workshops to 9th graders in local public schools. I ultimately want to pursue a career in Public Health. My hobbies include running, knitting, and exploring NYC.

I’m excited to be part of the MIRT program this summer because it’s a great opportunity to gain research experience, learn more about Latin America, and meet new people. I also think that this research will help me determine what area of Public Health I am most interested in for graduate school and eventually a career.

**Sam’s Personal Statement**

My name is Aline Souza and I am an undergraduate student at Wake Forest University. I am majoring in Health and Exercise Science and double-minoring in Chemistry and Spanish. My passions include medicine, research, photography, and travelling. I hope to attend graduate school for a Masters in Physician’s Assistant Studies and a Masters in Public Health. In the future, I would love to spend some time volunteering with Doctors without Borders and treating patients in various fields of medicine. I could not be more excited to be spending the summer in Chile as an MIRT fellow! I look forward to being immersed in the culture as well as conducting research on health disparities in an underserved area. I hope to interact with the locals, form friendships with other MIRT fellows and faculty, and make a difference! I am sure that this will be a life-changing experience through which I will grow and learn so much. I cannot wait until June!

**Aline’s Personal Statement**

“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you did not do than by the ones you did do.” —Mark Twain
My name is Claudia Martinez and I am currently a premed junior at Yale University majoring in Comparative Literature. I was born in Havana, Cuba and raised in Dallas, Texas. A visit to a provincial hospital during a brief return to Cuba in 2008 sparked an interest in healthcare that I later developed during my undergraduate career. The summer after my freshman year, I participated in a summer medical program at Duke University Hospital, where exposure to the Pediatric Emergency Room and Intensive Care Unit initiated my interest in pediatrics. I consequently went on to work in an autism laboratory at the Yale Child Study Center, further solidifying my interest in child healthcare. Hoping to bridge language and cultural gaps that may impede patient-physician relations, I worked as a Spanish-English translator at a clinic last summer. I look forward to linking my passion of language and literature with my global health interests by becoming a pediatrician and eventually authoring books that portray the experiences and capture the narratives of patients in developing countries. Aside from my global health related interests, I love to dance and am a member of Yale’s Latin Dance Team – hopefully I’ll learn a few Peruvian dances over the course of the summer as well! I hope that my fellowship in Peru through the MIRT Program will not only provide hands-on clinical research opportunities, but also a cultural immersion experience that will transform the way I view the world in all areas of life.

Raphaelle Oriol
Undergraduate, New York U
MIRT site: Peru

Hi, my name is Raphaelle Oriol. Currently, I am an undergraduate at New York University, pursuing a degree in public health and following the pre-med track. I am an outgoing and determined individual with a passion for helping others who are in need. While I still enjoy playing soccer, cooking and traveling have become my main hobbies. Having never traveled to South America, I am very eager to spend my summer in Peru. I can only imagine that I will have a humbling experience in which I will be participating in very meaningful research. As the date approaches I am anticipating a chance to strengthen my desire for a career in medicine and future public health research programs.

“One’s philosophy is not best expressed in words; it is expressed in the choices one makes. In the long run, we shape our lives and we shape ourselves. The process never ends until we die. And, the choices we make are ultimately our own responsibility.” —Eleanor Roosevelt
**Hazar’s Personal Statement**

Hello! My name is Hazar Khidir and I am currently a graduating senior majoring in Biology and Anthropology at Truman State University in Kirksville, Missouri. This fall, I will be a first year medical student (school to be decided very soon!). I have spent most of my life in the heart of the United States though I was born and spent the first five years of my life in El Obeid, Sudan. Some of my passions are learning about and sharing in other cultures, global health, and eating tasty food. This past year I spent a fantastic summer in Cape Town, South Africa where I had the opportunity to do all three of these. I anticipate that this summer will be even better and more life-changing!

I am excited and honored to have the opportunity to be a MIRT fellow in Ethiopia this summer! Though I have carried out basic science research as an undergraduate, I am seeing more than ever the value of public health research in developing pragmatic, innovative strategies for improving the health of populations in developing countries. I believe that the HSPH MIRT Program will provide me with essential training and experience in conducting population-based research in the communities I hope to serve. I also believe it will help me gain verification in what direction that I would like to take my career.

**Sheila’s Personal Statement**

My name is Sheila Patel, I am an undergraduate studying Health Policy and Management at the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health and am also working on obtaining a Social & Economic Justice minor. Many of my global health interests have come from my experiences working with local immigrant populations in schools and clinics in North Carolina and I am really excited to apply and expand the knowledge that I have in a new setting. I am so honored to be a 2012 HSPH MIRT Fellow, and am so grateful for the chance to gain valuable research experience in Ethiopia! I hope that this opportunity will help me better understand how to establish connections that bring about real change on both the individual and community levels, giving me the tools to better promote global public health.
Hi, my name is Yared Tarekegn. Currently I am a student at the University of Maryland College Park studying Biological Science and I am planning to pursue Public Health as a minor. Following the completion of my present undergraduate degree in biology and public health, I plan to pursue graduate work including doctoral studies in public health. In my free time, I like to spend in the outdoor environment especially hiking, running and spending quality time with friends and family.

I am honored to be part of the HSPH MIRT program. I am excited to participate in the MIRT Ethiopia site. I believe the HSPH MIRT Program will give me an opportunity to conduct research that evaluates the impact of diseases and develops control strategies in affected communities. I also hope this experience will help me develop practical skills that can be employed to better understand the challenges that presently affect public health in developing countries.

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My name is Gardenia Casillas and I grew up in Salinas, California, the so called “Salad Bowl of America” amid endless fields of strawberries and lettuce. I travelled north to the Bay Area where I am currently a Junior standing undergraduate studying Public Health and Global Poverty at the University of California, Berkeley. From classroom to field work, I have also been educated by my work as a Community Outreach Coordinator and Political Department Intern for the United Farm Workers, through my engagement in campus health and student advocacy organizations, as well as through my current work as a Student Research Assistant for the CHAMACOS Study (Center for the Health Assessment of Mothers and Children of Salinas). This summer I hope that my research experience in Ethiopia, Africa through the Harvard School of Public Health MIRT Program will help expand my knowledge in the area of women’s reproductive health and community health. By engaging in such an adventure, this experience will help me better understand the issues that marginalized communities face globally, and expose me to the work being done to address health disparities within these communities. When I have free time, I enjoy running, journaling, and eating lots of really good food in the Bay Area.

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MIRT 2012 Fellows
Sixto Sanchez, MD, MPH, is the Chief of Office of Public Health Intelligence at Hospital Rebagliatia and Professor of Postgraduate Studies at Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos in Peru. Dr. Sanchez has been working with MIRT Program faculty and students since 1996. Dr. Sanchez has mentored scores of MIRT Program students while addressing many important public health problems in Peru including bacterial vaginosis, preeclampsia, placental abruption, migraines, and intimate partner violence.

Why did you choose Epidemiology?
I love to do research, to investigate the underlying causes of health problems in a population, and to teach. For me, Epidemiology combines these three!

Who is your role model?
Dr. King Holmes (from the University of Washington). He was my MPH thesis advisor. I learned many things from him.

What job would you have chosen if you were not an Epidemiologist?
A chemist or pharmacist

What in your life are you most proud of, and why?
I have done the best I can to make my parents happy before they become old. Because they represent a model for me and I love them dearly.

What is your favorite music?
Rock of 70s and 80s, classic music, love songs in Spanish

What is your favorite movie?
Dances with wolves

What is your favorite Quote?
Put yourself in his/her shoes

What is something most people would be surprised to learn about you?
My attitude of helping them

What is your preferred menu?
In Peru: Arroz con pollo (chicken with rice - garnished with cilantro and vegetables)
In the USA: Teriyaki fried chicken, Mongolian beef, Phad Thai noodles, pumpkin pie cake

What are your hobbies?
Playing tennis, soccer, hiking (going to the country side), going to the beach

Are you a 'morning' or 'night' person?
Night person

Where is your favorite place to travel to?
Seattle, Rio de Janeiro

Which publication are you most proud of?

If it was possible, with whom would you like to change for one month?
With the President of Peru

What is your favorite word?
Perseverance

What is your least favorite word?
Selfishness, laziness

What do you like most about Lima?
The old part of the city with colonial monuments

What do you like least about Lima?
The heavy traffic some times

What’s your best advice to students who want to succeed?
It is also important to develop skills through classrooms, by working with senior investigators, and belonging to a research team. But it is equally important for students (or faculty!) to have perseverance to succeed especially in research.

“If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.” —Dalai Lama
Objective: Intimate partner violence (IPV) is increasingly recognized as an important cause of maternal and perinatal morbidity. We assessed the relation between IPV and risk of spontaneous preterm (PTB) among Peruvian women.

Methods: The study was conducted among 479 pregnant women who delivered a preterm singleton infant (<37 weeks gestation) and 480 controls (≥37 weeks gestation). Participants exposure to physical and emotional violence during pregnancy was collected during in-person interviews conducted after delivery and while patients were in hospital. Odds ratios (aOR) and 95% confidence intervals (CI) were estimated from logistic regression models.

Results: The prevalence of any IPV during pregnancy was 52.2% among cases and 34.6% among controls. Compared with those reporting no exposure to IPV during pregnancy, women reporting any exposure had a 2.1-fold increased risk of PTB (95% CI 1.59-2.68). The association was attenuated slightly after adjusting for maternal age, pre-pregnancy weight, and other covariates (OR=1.99; 95% CI: 1.52-2.61). Emotional abuse in the absence of physical violence was associated with a 1.6-fold (95% CI 1.21-2.15) increased risk of PTB. Emotional and physical abuse during pregnancy was associated with a 4.7-fold increased risk of PTB (95% CI 2.74-7.92). Associations of similar directions and magnitudes were observed when PTB were sub-categorized according to clinical presentation or severity.

Conclusion: IPV among pregnant women is common and is associated with an increased risk of PTB. Our findings and those of others, supports recent calls for coordinated global health efforts to prevent violence against women.

Background: The objective of this study was to evaluate reference intervals for complete blood cell count parameters among apparently healthy 1,807 adults from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Materials and Methods: Blood specimens were collected from each participant using standard procedures. The collected aliquots were processed according to standard operating procedures to determine participants’ complete blood counts. Non-parametric methods were employed to calculate the reference intervals and 90% Confidence Intervals for complete blood counts.

Results: Overall the results show that reference ranges for women are lower than men. The white blood cell count, neutrophils, lymphocytes, monocytes, eosinophils, and basophils reference values appear to be lower than values reported elsewhere.

Conclusion: Our study is the first comprehensive study on reference intervals of complete blood count among apparently healthy adult population in Ethiopia. Future studies that assess other hematological parameters; and studies that assess reference values for African pediatric populations are warranted.
The HSPH MIRT Program pre-travel orientation designed to prepare MIRT fellows for their experiences in Chile, Ethiopia and Peru was held for two days on May 10 and 11 at Harvard School of Public Health, Boston, MA.

The pre-travel orientation has been the cornerstone of the Program for all MIRT fellows as it provides opportunities to meet and network with fellow MIRT-ies, get important information on travel health, ethical conduct of human research and cultural competence while gaining skills necessary for conducting epidemiologic research.

Fellows had the opportunity to learn from experts around the country. The fellows also had a good opportunity to take care of last minute details before leaving home for their respective foreign research sites.

Thank you for all who participated in making the orientation a great success!

Dr. Ed Ryan, Associate professor at Harvard Medical School and Director of tropical Medicine, Division of Infection disease at Mass General hospital shared his expertise on travel health

Dr. Mahlet Tadesse, Associate Professor at Georgetown University and Yerby Visiting Professor at Harvard School of Public Health introduced fellows to the fun world of Epidemiology and Biostatistics

Alyssa Spier(l) and Leslie Howes (r) of the office of Human Research Administration at Harvard School of Public Health provided fellows with a lecture on bioethics and responsible research

Karlotta Rosebaugh, the MIRT Program Advisory Board Member and Director of Health Sciences Minority Students at University of Washington provided a lecture and led a group discussion on Cultural and Global Citizenship Competency Training

Steve Taylor, Associate Director of International Safety and Security, Harvard Global Support Services provided helpful and practical tips on travel safety
Dr. Marshala Lee was an undergraduate student at Tougaloo College in Jackson, Mississippi when she participated in the MIRT Program in 2005. During her fellowship, she went to Bangkok Thailand (with Dr. Williams) to work on a project entitled “Risk Factors of Hypertension and Correlates of Blood Pressure and Mean Arterial Pressure among Patients Receiving Health Exams at the Preventive Medicine Clinic, King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital, Thailand.” Since completing her MIRT fellowship, Marshala completed her medical degree at Brown University Medical College.

Currently, I’m going into my second year as a family medicine resident at the University of Maryland Medical Center after graduating from Brown Medical School in May 2011 with a concentration in Advocacy and Activism and graduated as a member of the Gold Humanism Honor Society.

As a resident, I wrote a grant funded by the American Academy of Family Physicians entitled, Better My Identity (BMI) which is a childhood obesity prevention program for elementary students in Baltimore. We meet twice a month for interactive sessions which are comprised of nutrition, wellness, and physical fitness components.

I hope to become a research physician and obtain either my Masters of public health or Masters in public policy after finishing residency. I hope to become the Surgeon General of the United States.

We are proud of you, Dr. Marshala Lee!

Alumni Update

Do you have an update (career changes, promotions, honors, births, etc.) to share with us?

Help us keep you informed and let us know how you’re doing!

We would love to hear from you!

Name:_______________________________________________________________

Update:________________________________________________________________

E-mail Address:_________________________________________________________
The Harvard School of Public Health MIRT/MHIRT Program (formerly the University of Washington MIRT Program) is a national program designed to encourage students to pursue careers in biomedical and behavioral research. This program provides support for undergraduates and graduate students to gain research training in an international setting. The HSPH MIRT/MHIRT Program is funded by the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) and Fogarty International Center (FIC) of the National Institutes of Health. The program has established linkages and training sites with academic institutions throughout the developing world, including in Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Vietnam, Thailand, Republic of Georgia, Peru, Mexico, Ecuador, Chile, and Australia. Research opportunities are designed collaboratively with faculty members in these institutions to address health and health disparities pertinent to their countries.

Striving to Eliminate Health Disparities
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www.hsph.harvard.edu/mirt

Photo Quiz
She was the first woman institute director at the National Institutes of Health. Her career, spanning more than half a century, was marked by outstanding scientific and administrative public service and leadership. She helped develop and refine tests to assure the safety of viral vaccines for diseases such as polio, measles and rubella. Her work on polio led to the Sabin vaccine’s selection for public use. Thanks to the Sabin vaccine, polio has been eradicated in the United States and many other areas of the world. In the early days of AIDS she launched a structural biology program that was highly significant in drug design and discovering the viral targets for the development of antiretroviral drugs for HIV. The program is still an important component of the AIDS program. She was a strong advocate for research training, especially interdisciplinary predoctoral programs and programs to increase the number of minority biomedical scientists, physician-scientists, and scientists trained in emerging or evolving areas.

Who is this remarkable woman?
A special prize will be awarded to the first person providing the correct response. Send your response to bgelaye@hsph.harvard.edu **** Cheers!